



Daily Report

Wednesday, 23 September 2020

This report shows written answers and statements provided on 23 September 2020 and the information is correct at the time of publication (06:27 P.M., 23 September 2020). For the latest information on written questions and answers, ministerial corrections, and written statements, please visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers/>

CONTENTS

ANSWERS	6	■ Armed Forces: Health	14
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	6	■ Shipbuilding: Hydrogen	14
■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]	6	■ Warships: Shipbuilding	15
■ Business: Coronavirus	6	DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT	15
■ Ceramics	6	■ Arts: Staffordshire	15
■ Construction: Insurance	7	■ BBC: Pay	15
■ Energy Supply	7	■ British Telecom: Reorganisation	16
■ Energy: Competition	8	■ Choirs: Coronavirus	16
■ Foreign Companies: Takeovers	8	■ Communications: Coronavirus	17
■ Fuel Poverty	8	■ Internet: West Bromwich	17
■ Geothermal Power	9	■ Music: Coronavirus	18
■ Hydrogen	9	■ Public Libraries: Coronavirus	19
■ Marriage: Coronavirus	10	■ Revenue and Customs: Computer Software	20
■ Members: Correspondence	11	■ Third Sector: Redundancy	20
■ Transport: Hydrogen	11	■ TV Licences	20
■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme	12	EDUCATION	21
CABINET OFFICE	12	■ Apprentices: Coronavirus	21
■ Civil Servants: Training	12	■ Assessments and Curriculum	22
■ Devolution	12	■ Boarding Schools: Coronavirus	23
■ G7	13	■ Children in Care	23
DEFENCE	13	■ Children: Protection	25
■ Armed Forces: Cadets	13	■ Education: Coronavirus	27

■ Educational Institutions: Sanitary Protection	28	FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	43
■ Free School Meals	29	■ CDC: Azalai Hotels	43
■ Holiday Play Schemes: Free School Meals	30	■ Developing Countries: Water	43
■ Home Education	30	■ Human Rights: Females	44
■ Members: Correspondence	31	■ Hygiene: Schools	44
■ Pre-school Education: Coronavirus	31	■ Iran: Capital Punishment	45
■ Pupils: Coronavirus	32	■ Iran: Human Rights	45
■ Runshaw College	32	■ Overseas Aid	45
■ Schools: Breakfast Clubs	33	■ Overseas Aid: Peacekeeping Operations	46
■ Schools: Coronavirus	33	■ Pakistan: Religious Freedom	46
■ Sixth Form Colleges: Portsmouth	34	■ Rohingya: Diplomatic Relations	46
■ Students: Loans	34	■ Sudan: Floods	47
■ Teachers: Coronavirus	35	■ Syria: Migrant Camps	47
■ Teachers: Labour Turnover	35	■ Yemen: Tankers	48
■ Teachers: Training	36	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	48
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS	36	■ Antenatal Care: Coronavirus	48
■ Agriculture: Forests	36	■ Brain Cancer: Research	50
■ Agriculture: Shropshire	37	■ Care Homes: Primary Health Care	50
■ Animal Welfare: Sentencing	37	■ Chief Medical Officer: Coronavirus	50
■ Clothing: Waste	38	■ Childbirth	51
■ Developing Countries: Poaching	38	■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Ethnic Groups	51
■ Exclusive Economic Zone: Environment Protection	39	■ Coronavirus: Bradford	52
■ Fish: Exports	39	■ Coronavirus: Death	52
■ Litter: Waste Disposal	40	■ Coronavirus: Disease Control	53
■ Sewage: Waste Disposal	41	■ Coronavirus: Mental Health	57
■ Territorial Waters: Environment Protection	41	■ Coronavirus: North East	57
■ Water Voles: South West	42	■ Coronavirus: Quarantine	58
		■ Coronavirus: Research	58

■ Coronavirus: Screening	59	■ Large Goods Vehicles: Coronavirus	74
■ Coronavirus: Vaccination	61	■ Malnutrition: Coronavirus	74
■ Crematoriums: Coronavirus	61	■ Maternal Mortality: Ethnic Groups	75
■ Dental Services	62	■ Maternity Services: Coronavirus	75
■ Dental Services: Coronavirus	62	■ Medical Certificates: Fees and Charges	77
■ Dental Services: Laboratories	64	■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review	77
■ DNANudge: Coronavirus	64	■ Members: Telephone Services	77
■ Down's Syndrome: Screening	65	■ Mental Health Services: Standards	78
■ Electronic Cigarettes: Coronavirus	65	■ Mental Health Services: Worcestershire	78
■ Endometriosis: Research	65	■ Mental Health: Community Development	78
■ Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome	66	■ Musicians: Coronavirus	79
■ Food: Labelling	66	■ NHS: Negligence	80
■ Funerals: Coronavirus	67	■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures	82
■ Gambling	67	■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Regulation	82
■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus	67	■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Training	83
■ General Practitioners: Medical Records	68	■ Obesity: Health Services	83
■ Genetics: Chronic Illnesses	68	■ Ophthalmic Services: Transport	84
■ Haemochromatosis: Medical Treatments	68	■ Paracetamol	84
■ Health	69	■ Pharmacy: Disclosure of Information	88
■ Health Professions: Infectious Diseases	69	■ Pharmacy: Protective Clothing	88
■ Hormone Replacement Therapy	69	■ Pregnancy: Sodium Valproate	89
■ Hospitals: Coronavirus	70	■ Randox Testing Services: Coronavirus	90
■ In Vitro Fertilisation	70		
■ Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review	71		
■ Influenza: Vaccination	71		
■ Insulin and Medical Equipment	74		

■ School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme	90	JUSTICE	103
■ Sepsis: Health Education	91	■ Courts: York	103
■ Sexually Transmitted Infections	91	■ Dangerous Driving: Sentencing	104
■ Sitel: Coronavirus	91	■ Family Courts: York	104
■ Smoking	92	■ Magistrates' Courts: York	105
■ Smoking: Ashfield	93	■ Prisons	106
■ Smoking: Public Houses	94	■ Prisons: Coronavirus	107
■ Social Distancing: Coronavirus	94	NORTHERN IRELAND	107
■ Social Prescribing: Finance	95	■ Northern Ireland Executive	107
■ Sodium Valproate: Prescriptions	95	TRANSPORT	108
■ Suicide: Higher Education	95	■ Bus Services: Coronavirus	108
■ Surgery: Waiting Lists	96	■ Crossrail Line	108
■ Thalassaemia	96	■ Department for Transport: Apprentices	108
■ Vaccination: Licensing	97	■ Shipping: Pay	109
■ Veterans: Mental Health Services	97	TREASURY	109
■ Visual Impairment: Research	98	■ Credit Rating: Coronavirus	109
■ Vitamin D: Coronavirus	98	■ Eat Out to Help Out Scheme	110
HOME OFFICE	99	■ Employment: Coronavirus	110
■ British Nationality: Zimbabwe	99	■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: VAT	111
■ Extradition: USA	99	■ Hospitality Industry: VAT	111
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	101	■ Public Houses: Non-domestic Rates	111
■ Building Safety Fund	101	■ Revenue and Customs: Correspondence	112
■ Buildings: Insulation	102	WORK AND PENSIONS	112
■ Housing: Construction	102	■ Child Maintenance Service: Correspondence	112
■ Planning	102	■ Pension Funds: Climate Change	112
■ Social Rented Housing: Construction	103	■ Personal Independence Payment	113
INTERNATIONAL TRADE	103	■ Universal Credit	114
■ Blood: Exports	103		

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS 115

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND
SPORT 115

■ Digital Technology 115

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH
AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE 116

■ Mauritius: Oil 116

HOME OFFICE 116

■ Common Travel Area 116

■ Immigration Controls 117

■ Immigration Controls: Northern
Ireland 120

WRITTEN STATEMENTS 122

CABINET OFFICE 122

■ Meeting of the Withdrawal
Agreement Joint Committee 122

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND
SPORT 122

■ Loot Box Call for Evidence
Launch 122

Notes:

Questions marked thus **[R]** indicate that a relevant interest has been declared.

Questions with identification numbers of **900000 or greater** indicate that the question was originally tabled as an oral question and has since been unstarred.

ANSWERS

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

■ [Subject Heading to be Assigned]

Alexander Stafford:

[\[91744\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to encourage young people to study courses relating to mining and the procurement of energy at higher education.

Amanda Solloway:

The Government, through UK Research and Innovation, fund informal learning programmes to inspire young people to take up STEM subjects and careers and provide a future generation passionate about STEM, including geological science. For example, we support the STEM Ambassador programme, a nationwide network of over 30,000 volunteers from a wide range of employers, who engage with young people to provide stimulating and inspirational activities to increase their interest in STEM subjects and to raise awareness of the range of careers that STEM qualifications offer.

■ Business: Coronavirus

Kevin Hollinrake:

[\[90186\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the number of businesses unable to repay debt resulting from the effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

Paul Scully:

The Government will continue to work closely with local authorities, businesses, and business representative organisations to understand the impact of Covid-19 on businesses. This will include consideration of how payments for deferred VAT and loan repayments will impact businesses from March 2021.

We are developing a consistent industry-wide approach to the collections and recoveries of Bounce Back loans. This will ensure that lenders understand the full range of support they can provide to borrowers struggling to repay their loans.

■ Ceramics

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[90284\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support research and development in ceramics.

Amanda Solloway:

Through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF), ceramics, along with the other 5 sectors that make up the foundation industries, are eligible for a share of the £66 million Transforming Foundation Industries. This Challenge looks to reduce

environmental impact (including carbon emissions) through resource and energy efficiency. It is funding a number of projects relevant to the ceramics industry including hybrid sintering, development of new ceramic fibres for enhanced filtering, heat recovery in furnaces, robotics based optimisation and non-combustible cladding systems.

The Midlands Industrial Ceramics for Industry 4.0 project were recently awarded seedcorn funding of up to £50,000, under wave 2 of the Strength in Places Fund. The investment will build on existing ceramic and manufacturing strengths to help to make the Midlands a global leader in advanced ceramics. .

The Government is implementing its ambitious research and development roadmap to ensure the UK is the best place in the world for scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs to live and work, while helping to power up the UK's economic and social recovery and level up the UK.

■ **Construction: Insurance**

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[91667\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of requiring construction businesses to hold public liability insurance that covers work experience students.

Nadhim Zahawi:

Work experience students are considered to be employees, and will be covered by the employers' liability insurance policy of a business, provided the insurer is a member of the Association of British Insurers, or Lloyds.

■ **Energy Supply**

Jessica Morden:

[\[90096\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to include representatives of the electricity network supply chain in the Government's future engagement with industry and other stakeholders on the development of the energy system.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

The Government's commitment to reduce emissions to net zero by 2050 puts clean growth at the heart of our modern Industrial Strategy. The manufacturing sector will have a key role to play in delivering the required investment in energy infrastructure to help meet these commitments. It also provides an opportunity to develop skills, provide employment and boost exports, which will be key in supporting a post-COVID green recovery. Government will continue to engage with the electricity network supply chain, along with a wide range of stakeholders, as we work towards developing a smarter, more flexible energy system.

■ Energy: Competition

Dr Alan Whitehead:

[\[90028\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with Ofgem on a programme of expanded rollout of collective switching for the most disengaged customers.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

BEIS has regular discussions with Ofgem, including on what measures might be needed to help remove the barriers to consumer engagement. This includes the potential for collective switching and consideration of the results from Ofgem's previous trials. The Government will set out more details in due course.

Alex Sobel:

[\[90223\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions his Department has had with Ofgem on a programme of expanded rollout of collective switching for the most disengaged customers.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

BEIS has regular discussions with Ofgem, including on what measures might be needed to help remove the barriers to consumer engagement. This includes the potential for collective switching and consideration of the results from Ofgem's previous trials. The Government will set out more details in due course.

■ Foreign Companies: Takeovers

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90254\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on best practice for preventing business takeovers by hostile state actors.

Paul Scully:

I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 14th July 2020 to Question [69694](#). The Government engages frequently with its closest allies on a range of subjects, including investment screening.

■ Fuel Poverty

Simon Fell:

[\[90246\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to ensure that (a) poor and (b) vulnerable fuel consumers do not face increased costs as a result of a transition to (i) low carbon and (ii) decarbonised energy plans.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Our aim is to deliver net zero at the lowest cost for all consumers. A key part of this is supporting consumers who may struggle to afford their energy.

We intend to publish an updated Fuel Poverty Strategy for England by the end of the year which will provide further information on our plans to support low income and vulnerable households as we transition to net zero.

The Energy Company Obligation, worth £640m per year, is already focused on low income and vulnerable households and the recently launched Green Homes Grant, which will provide up to £10,000 for vulnerable consumers to make their home more energy efficient. We also provide support with energy bills for low income and vulnerable consumers through the Warm Homes Discount, Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments.

■ Geothermal Power

Jonathan Gullis:

[\[90285\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to support geothermal energy generation.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

Opportunities for geothermal electricity generation in the UK are limited and only likely to be economically feasible in certain locations, such as the far South West of England. The Government is supporting the development of the United Downs Deep Geothermal Project in Cornwall.

The most promising use of geothermal energy in the UK is for low temperature applications such as district heating schemes. BEIS has been providing support to the deployment of district heat networks from geothermal through the Heat Networks Delivery Unit (HNDU) and the Heat Networks Investment Project (HNIP). We also announced a further £270m from 2022 to 2025 in the Green Heat Network Fund at the March budget and we will be consulting on eligibility criteria this Autumn.

■ Hydrogen

Alan Brown:

[\[90174\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that the French and German Government's plan to work together on hydrogen development.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are following international hydrogen developments and participate in a range of international fora, including the Clean Energy Ministerial, the International Partnership for Hydrogen for Fuel Cells in the Economy and Mission Innovation. These offer opportunities to discuss other countries' domestic hydrogen strategies in detail and explore opportunities for collaboration. We plan to publish a UK Hydrogen Strategy in early 2021. This will be informed in part by assessment of international activity and the opportunities and challenges that presents for the UK.

Alexander Stafford:

[90303]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports that the French and German governments plan to work together on hydrogen development.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are following international hydrogen developments and participate in a range of international fora, including the Clean Energy Ministerial, the International Partnership for Hydrogen for Fuel Cells in the Economy and Mission Innovation. These offer opportunities to discuss other countries' domestic hydrogen strategies in detail and explore opportunities for collaboration. We plan to publish a UK Hydrogen Strategy in early 2021. This will be informed in part by assessment of international activity and the opportunities and challenges that presents for the UK.

Alexander Stafford:

[90304]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has with his counterparts in European countries on co-operating with other international partners on hydrogen.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are closely monitoring international hydrogen developments and participate in a range of international forums, including the International Partnership for Hydrogen for Fuel Cells in the Economy, Mission Innovation and Clean Energy Ministerial, and ad hoc meetings. These offer opportunities to discuss other countries' domestic hydrogen strategies in detail and explore opportunities for collaboration. Since the UK has left the European Union, we are seeking to engage and cooperate with the EU and with EU Member States on hydrogen through normal diplomatic channels.

■ Marriage: Coronavirus

Jane Hunt:

[90293]

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether his Department has made an assessment of the feasibility of increasing the number of people allowed to attend weddings at licensed venues where the event is (a) seated and (b) social distancing measures can be adhered to.

Paul Scully:

Wedding receptions can only take place in a COVID-19 secure environment which adheres to the appropriate guidelines which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-small-marriages-and-civil-partnerships>.

The limit of 15 people at a wedding reception from 28 September will remain one of the few occasions when people are legally permitted to gather in groups of more than 6 people.

Members: Correspondence**Rosie Cooper:**[\[90088\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will take steps to encourage (a) Proctor & Gamble and (b) Assist Recruitment to respond to correspondence from the hon. Member for West Lancashire of 27 May 2020 on their employment policies.

Paul Scully:

The Department is unable to intervene in individual cases of correspondence.

Transport: Hydrogen**Alan Brown:**[\[90173\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had representatives of the (a) energy and (b) transport sector about the role a hydrogen hub can play in supporting the wider growth of the UK hydrogen economy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are aware of the value in co-locating low carbon hydrogen supply and demand in the early stages of expansion in any hydrogen economy; an approach sometimes referred to as a hydrogen hub. Ministers and officials are engaging extensively with hydrogen and wider energy stakeholders as we develop a UK Hydrogen Strategy for publication in early 2021. Discussions include ways in which to coordinate supply and demand and attract early investment as the hydrogen market develops, including place based approaches.

We have also explored the role of hydrogen in helping to decarbonise transport as part of a series of stakeholder workshops helping to develop the Transport Decarbonisation Plan due to be published before the end of the year.

Alexander Stafford:[\[90302\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with representatives of the energy sector on the potential role a hydrogen hub can play in supporting the wider growth of the UK hydrogen economy.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We are aware of the value in co-locating low carbon hydrogen supply and demand in the early stages of expansion in any hydrogen economy; an approach sometimes referred to as a hydrogen hub. Ministers and officials are engaging extensively with hydrogen and wider energy stakeholders as we develop a UK Hydrogen Strategy for publication in early 2021. Discussions include ways in which to coordinate supply and demand and attract early investment as the hydrogen market develops, including place based approaches.

■ UK Emissions Trading Scheme

Anthony Mangnall: [\[90266\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department has made on introducing a UK emissions trading scheme.

Kwasi Kwarteng:

We intend to establish a UK Emissions Trading System (UK ETS), which will increase our ambition on carbon pricing.

The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme Order 2020 draft Order in Council required to set up the UK ETS was laid on 13 July 2020 in the UK and Scottish Parliaments, and on 15 July 2020 in the Welsh Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly. Further UK ETS legislation is on track to be laid by the end of 2020, in all four legislatures.

Work on the technical systems required for a UK ETS is also proceeding as planned.

In order to ensure a carbon price remains in place in all scenarios, the UK published a consultation in July 2020 on the design of a Carbon Emission Tax as an additional alternative to a UK ETS.

CABINET OFFICE

■ Civil Servants: Training

Neil O'Brien: [\[86147\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what the Government's policy is on unconscious bias training for civil servants; and what plans he has to encourage the use of that training among civil servants.

Neil O'Brien: [\[86161\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, how much the Department spent on unconscious bias training in each of the last five years.

Julia Lopez:

A review is currently being done of what future diversity and inclusion learning should be provided as part of a cross-Civil Service Learning offer. This includes looking at unconscious bias training, and what training shall be promoted. The information on spend is not held centrally.

■ Devolution

Anthony Mangnall: [\[90272\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, what progress the Government has made on its review of intergovernmental relations between the UK Government and the devolved Administrations.

Chloe Smith:

Substantial progress is being made on the review of intergovernmental relations.

I have met with Ministers from the devolved administrations in both August and earlier this month to discuss proposals for dispute avoidance and resolution, future intergovernmental machinery and measures to improve transparency of intergovernmental relations. We agreed to work on a final package of recommendations in the coming weeks.

■ **G7****Anthony Mangnall:**[\[90256\]](#)

To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, if he will invite India, Australia and South Korea to attend the G7 summit in the UK in 2021.

Penny Mordaunt:

The UK is preparing an ambitious and unifying G7 agenda that will promote international leadership and collaboration as we respond to and recover from Covid-19. No decision has been taken on which guest nations to invite to the 2021 Leaders Summit.

DEFENCE■ **Armed Forces: Cadets****Fabian Hamilton:**[\[90941\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many chaplains in each religious denomination served in the Sea Cadet Corps in 2019.

Fabian Hamilton:[\[90942\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what information his Department holds on the religious denomination of (a) cadets and (b) adults in the Sea Cadet Corps in the last two years.

Fabian Hamilton:[\[90944\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many (a) abuse allegations, (b) abuse cases referred to the police, (c) volunteers dismissed as a result of abuse allegations were recorded in the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) in each year since 2017; and how many chaplains serving in the SCC were involved in those cases.

James Heapey:

The information requested is not held by the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Unlike the Army, Royal Air Force and Combined Cadet Forces, the Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) is not wholly funded or managed by the MOD. SCC units are independent charities in their own right, affiliated to the Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC), itself an independent charity. The MSSC is responsible for the overall management of cadets and volunteers.

■ Armed Forces: Health**Jack Lopresti:****[91008]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what steps his Department is taking to improve (a) access to phone calls, (b) access to high speed internet and (c) the welfare of armed services personnel deployed abroad on exercise or operations.

James Heappey:

Defence spends in excess of £9 million per year to provide digital welfare services to deployed personnel. To maximise value for money and to get the best possible service for personnel deployed overseas on Operations and Exercises, Defence always seeks to use local telecoms infrastructure (4G, WiFi or Broadband Internet) wherever possible. As a minimum this enables regular daily voice calls and, in most cases, provides access to video communication and on-line entertainment streaming services, but this is dependent on both the infrastructure and security considerations.

When there is no local or only poor-quality fixed infrastructure available (e.g. on deployed Maritime operations), welfare services such as video communications and entertainment services are provided using the Skynet 5 satellites. In recent months, recognising the impact caused by the COVID crisis and the strain on Service personnel, Defence Digital and Airbus Defence and Space has increased capacity for the maritime welfare services.

Future welfare services for deployed personnel will be provided as part of the follow-on Skynet 6 programme, which is expected to be delivered in the mid-2020s timeframe. The aim is to provide service personnel with unlimited access to high-speed internet anywhere in the world and at any time. As this work forms part of an underway competitive tendering process the expected costs cannot be provided at this time.

■ Shipbuilding: Hydrogen**Alan Brown:****[90175]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the role of hydrogen in decarbonising the naval ship building industry.

Alexander Stafford:**[90305]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the role of hydrogen in decarbonising the naval ship building industry.

Jeremy Quin:

The Secretary of State for Defence, in his role as Shipbuilding Tsar, is working across Government to support the shipbuilding enterprise. This includes supporting the Department for Transport and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on how industry can embrace zero emissions technology, including

alternative fuels like hydrogen. The Royal Navy are taking actions to reduce carbon emissions where possible and explore alternative fuels.

■ Warships: Shipbuilding

Taiwo Owatemi: [90279]

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what assessment his Department has made of the potential economic merits of building naval support vessels in UK shipyards.

Jeremy Quin:

This Government is acutely aware of the significant contribution to the economy by the shipbuilding enterprise. The National Shipbuilding Strategy recognises the economic value that naval shipbuilding brings to the UK through design, build, and the supply chain. Economic assessments are made on all major Ministry of Defence procurements in line with Her Majesty's Treasury guidelines on value for money.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Arts: Staffordshire

Jonathan Gullis: [89873]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many organisations in (a) Stoke-on-Trent and (b) Staffordshire have received funding through the £1.57 billion arts, culture and heritage covid-19 rescue fund.

Caroline Dinenge:

Arts Council England, British Film Institute, Historic England and National Lottery Heritage Fund are considering applications for grant funding against agreed criteria, as set out in the published guidance.

Our priority is to ensure that organisations get the funding they need as swiftly as possible and we expect some funding decisions to be made this month with announcements soon after that. A list of the recipients of the Arts Council's Emergency Grassroots Music Venues Fund can be found here:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/document/emergency-grassroots-music-venues-fund-recipients>

This funding will provide a lifeline for thousands of organisations facing imminent challenges and will be available this financial year.

■ BBC: Pay

Dr Matthew Offord: [91011]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made for the implications of his policies of the BBC's publication of salaries paid to presenters this year.

Mr John Whittingdale:

- The BBC is operationally and editorially independent of Government, and therefore talent pay is a matter for the BBC.
- However, we expect to see the BBC using its substantial licence fee income in an appropriate way to ensure it delivers value for money for UK audiences.
- The public deserves to know how their licence fee is being spent, which is why in the Royal Charter the government required the BBC to publish the salary details of all BBC staff and talent paid over £150,000. This was published for the first time as part of the BBC 2016/17 annual report.

■ British Telecom: Reorganisation

Margaret Greenwood: [\[91771\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with BT on that company's reorganisation and maintaining jobs.

Margaret Greenwood: [\[91772\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what recent discussions he has had with the Communication Workers Union on the reorganisation of BT.

Matt Warman:

My department regularly engages with BT, and other relevant industry stakeholders, about a range of topics, including their UK workforce, at both official and ministerial level. We have not had any recent discussions with the Communication Workers Union on the reorganisation of BT, nor has the union requested a meeting with DCMS Ministers regarding this matter.

The Government is committed to boosting job creation in the UK. On 8 July, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's Plan for Jobs which makes up to £30 billion available, with a clear goal to create, protect, and support jobs.

■ Choirs: Coronavirus

Daisy Cooper: [\[90275\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with reference to the Government's guidance, last updated on 11 September 2020, entitled Working safely during coronavirus, Performing arts, whether that guidance applies to recreational choirs.

Caroline Dineneage:

As of 14 September non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than six at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than six (including when arriving at or leaving activity or

in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place."

We will continue to work with the Performing Arts sector to understand how the new regulations affect those engaging in activity. We have always been clear that the easing of restrictions depends on the prevalence of COVID-19.

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[90940\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what steps he is taking to ensure clarity on the guidance for choirs and choral societies who wish to meet and rehearse during the covid-19 outbreak.

Caroline Dineneage:

As of 14 September non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than six at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than six (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.

We will continue to work with the Performing Arts sector to understand how the new regulations affect those engaging in activity. We have always been clear that the easing of restrictions depends on the prevalence of COVID-19.

■ **Communications: Coronavirus**

Margaret Greenwood:

[\[91773\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment he has made of the role of communication workers in maintaining communications services during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The UK Government recognises the importance of the telecommunications industry at this critical time in keeping communities and businesses connected.

Communications workers, including but not limited to engineers, network operations and call centre staff, have all played, and continue to play an essential part in maintaining the availability of telecommunications networks during the Covid-19 outbreak.

■ **Internet: West Bromwich**

Nicola Richards:

[\[90306\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, if he will take steps to support residents in Living Well Street in Greets Green, West Bromwich to tackle slow internet speeds.

Matt Warman:

Living Well Street is currently not in any rollout plans via the local body, the Black Country LEP. While not eligible for our Rural Gigabit Vouchers, this helpful checker provides several local suppliers who are able to deliver to this area which residents may find useful (<https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/#suppliers>).

The government has the ambition of providing nationwide gigabit-capable connectivity as soon as possible. The government will continue to take action to remove barriers to commercial network rollout, and will ensure that those in the hardest to reach areas are not left behind. £5 billion of funding has been allocated to invest in the hardest to reach areas of the UK, ensuring that all residents will have access to the digital connectivity they need and deserve. Further details of the £5 billion programme will be published in due course. As of 27 August, 26% of UK premises have access to gigabit-capable speeds; however while this is good progress, I realise there is still much more to do.

The government also introduced the broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) on 20 March 2020. The USO gives eligible premises in the UK the right to request a decent and affordable connection. The government has defined decent broadband as a service that can provide a download speed of 10Mbps and an upload speed of 1Mbps. Further information can be found at this address:

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/broadband-uso-need-to-know>.

However, the vast majority of premises in urban areas such as Living Well Street are likely to be able to access a 4G or 5G mobile data service that provides USO level speeds or higher and so therefore will not qualify for assistance under the Universal Service Obligation. According to the Ofcom mobile availability checker, residents in Living Well Street can access a 4G connection across all four of the mobile network operators.

■ Music: Coronavirus**Conor McGinn:****[89757]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, what guidance his Department has issued on the implications for (a) brass bands, (b) choirs and (c) other amateur music groups of the Government's latest covid-19 restrictions.

Caroline Dineneage:

As of 14 September non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than six at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than six (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.

We will continue to work with the Performing Arts sector to understand how the new regulations affect those engaging in activity. We have always been clear that the easing of restrictions depends on the prevalence of COVID-19.

Nick Fletcher:

[90290]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, for what reasons amateur music ensembles are not permitted to perform as lockdown restrictions are eased; and what criteria his Department will use to determine when they will be allowed to perform again.

Caroline Dinenage:

As of 14 September non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than six at any time. If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than six (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.

We will continue to work with the Performing Arts sector to understand how the new regulations affect those engaging in activity. We have always been clear that the easing of restrictions depends on the prevalence of COVID-19.

■ **Public Libraries: Coronavirus**

Rachael Maskell:

[89787]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether he is taking steps to ensure that local authorities support local libraries during the next phases of the covid-19 outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Dinenage:

The Government is providing local councils with unprecedented support during the pandemic with a £4.3 billion package, including £3.7 billion which is not ringfenced and £600 million to support social care providers. This is part of a wider package of almost £28 billion which the Government has committed to support local areas, with funding going to councils, businesses and communities.

DCMS has a statutory duty to superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in England. To assist delivery of this statutory duty, DCMS issued a joint letter with the Local Government Association to all local authorities in England requesting detail of restoration of their library services given the opening of physical library buildings is now permitted. This detail will assist the department's engagement with local authorities and its ongoing monitoring of library service provision.

DCMS continues to work closely with Libraries Connected and other key stakeholders to ensure that the Libraries Connected Service Recovery Toolkit

remains relevant and continues to assist libraries with their opening and reintroduction of their services during the pandemic.

■ Revenue and Customs: Computer Software

Chi Onwurah: [\[90126\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, pursuant to the Answer of 14 September 2020 to Question 83792 and with reference to his statement of 9 July 2020 in his Computer Weekly article that Open banking models have allowed those in financial need to share their income to HM Revenue & Customs, fast-tracking their applications for new welfare entitlements, whether he was describing an application neither commissioned nor used by the Government.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The reference to Open Banking in the Computer Weekly article of 9 July 2020 was a reference to the Open Banking use case identified by the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI) as part of their COVID repository. The repository is a database for novel use-cases of artificial intelligence and data in public, private and third sectors being used to counter and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 around the world. This innovative application of Open Banking was developed to the beta stage but was neither commissioned nor used by the Government.

■ Third Sector: Redundancy

Rachael Maskell: [\[88900\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how his Department is recording redundancies from voluntary and community organisations making fewer than 20 people redundant during the covid-19 outbreak.

Mr John Whittingdale:

Employers proposing to make fewer than 20 redundancies are not required to report this. DCMS continues to engage closely with the community and voluntary sector to understand the impact of covid-19 on the sector and its important work. However, DCMS does not record redundancy data.

■ TV Licences

Jim Shannon: [\[91046\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, how many TV licences have been issued in each of the four regions of the UK in each of the last three years.

Mr John Whittingdale:

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport does not hold this information. Administration of the TV licence, including issuing licences to all parts of the UK, is a matter for the BBC as an independent body.

The BBC's licensing arm, TV Licensing, says on its website that it does not collect information on specific licence fee revenue by location as 'it has no reason for doing this'. However, the BBC Group Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 provide an estimate of the income from each nation of the UK from TV licence revenues for 2019 and 2020.

The report can be found on the BBC website here:

<https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/reports/annualreport>

EDUCATION

■ Apprentices: Coronavirus

Tom Hunt:

[88406]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support prospective apprentices while apprenticeship opportunities are reduced as a result of the covid-19 outbreak.

Gillian Keegan:

Apprenticeships will be more important than ever in helping businesses to recruit the right people and develop the skills they need to recover and grow. This government is committed to ensuring people of all ages can continue to benefit from the high-quality training that an apprenticeship offers. Through our 'Plan for Jobs', a total of £1.6 billion is to be invested in scaling up employment support schemes, training and apprenticeships.

To help support employers to offer new apprenticeships, employers are now able to claim £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire under the age of 25, and £1,500 for those 25 and over. We have introduced flexibilities to enable apprentices to continue to train during the outbreak and we encourage employers to take advantage of these flexibilities and the new payments. For apprentices who need to find a new employer, due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have launched the Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices, providing clear, accessible advice and guidance to individuals, while supporting their next steps. This includes our vacancy sharing service which works with employers to identify new apprenticeship opportunities which these apprentices can apply for.

We are supporting those who may be interested in an apprenticeship in the future, promoting apprenticeships in schools through our Apprenticeship Support & Knowledge programme, and tripling the scale of our traineeship programme to help young people progress onto an apprenticeship or other employment. We have also announced £101 million for a new offer to give 18 and 19-year-old school and college leavers the opportunity to study high value level 2 and 3 courses when there are not employment opportunities available to them.

■ Assessments and Curriculum

Rachael Maskell:

[83870]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to publish the Government's proposals for (a) a recovery curriculum and (b) the conduct of end of year assessments.

Nick Gibb:

We have published detailed guidance on curriculum expectations for the next academic year:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#section-3-curriculum-behaviour-and-pastoral-support>.

Our guidance asks school to provide an ambitious and broad curriculum from the start of the autumn term, while making use of existing flexibilities to create time to cover the most important missed content if required. Up to and including Key Stage 3, prioritisation within subjects is likely to be more effective than removing subjects, which pupils may struggle to pick up later. Schools should aim to return to their normal curriculum in all subjects by summer term 2021. To help support schools to make up for lost teaching time, the Government has announced a catch-up package worth £1 billion, including a 'Catch-up Premium' worth a total of £650 million to support all pupils to catch up.

The Department has confirmed its intention for the national curriculum 2021 assessments to take place in accordance with their usual timetable. Our intention is for all existing statutory Key Stage 1 and 2 assessments to return in 2020/21.

Exams and assessments are the best and fairest way of judging students' performance, and we expect next year's exam series to go ahead. However, we recognise that students due to sit exams and assessments next year will have experienced disruption to their education due to the COVID-19 outbreak. As such, we have been working closely with Ofqual, the exam boards and groups representing teachers, schools and colleges to consider our approach to exams and other assessments in 2021.

Ofqual has already consulted on a range of possible adaptations to GCSE, AS and A level exams and assessments next year on a subject-by-subject basis, and has announced some changes that will reduce pressure on teaching time, and help ensure those young people taking exams next year have the same opportunities to progress as the students before them.

We will continue to discuss these issues with school and college stakeholders, Ofqual and the exam boards, to ensure that exams in 2021 are fair and proceed smoothly.

On the timing of exams next year, the Secretary of State asked Ofqual in June to consider a short delay to the GCSE, A and AS level exam timetable in 2021, to free up additional teaching time. We are continuing to work with Ofqual, the exam boards, regulators in the devolved administrations, and groups representing schools, colleges

and higher education to consider the best approach, and decisions will be confirmed as soon as possible.

■ **Boarding Schools: Coronavirus**

Emma Hardy:

[83922]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that all residential educational settings follow PHE guidance on isolating pupils with covid-19 on the premises, with particular regard to international students with no family in the UK.

Nick Gibb:

The Department has provided guidance for all residential settings on supporting pupils living in those settings who either show symptoms of, or are confirmed to have, COVID-19. Additional guidance, specifically for boarding schools, is provided to help with the collection, transfer and isolation of students entering the UK and travelling to a named boarding school or a named household.

Both documents were prepared in consultation with Public Health England and are published on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-isolation-for-residential-educational-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-isolation-for-residential-educational-settings> ;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-boarding-schools-with-international-students>.

The Department's guidance explains that residential settings need to ensure that the arrangements for the oversight of any student in isolation protects their safety and welfare.

■ **Children in Care**

Tulip Siddiq:

[88361]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children (a) under and (b) over the age of 16 have been placed in unregulated residential care settings in each of the last twelve months.

Tulip Siddiq:

[88362]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many local authorities have authorised care placements for children in unregulated care settings in (a) each of the last ten years and (b) each of the last twelve months.

Vicky Ford:

On 31 March 2019, 6,180 looked after children were placed in semi-independent living or were living independently. Of these children, 6,090 were aged 16 years or over and 100 of these were aged under 16 years.

Information on care placement type is published annually in the statistical release 'Children looked after in England including adoption'. The latest data relates to the

year ending 31 March 2019. This data is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2018-to-2019>. The department does not routinely publish data in the form requested or monthly counts of any placement types.

Figures for the number of children placed in semi-independent living, or who were living independently, are shown in the table (by local authority area)[1].

[1] Some figures are not shown in order to protect confidentiality. Therefore, the rounded aggregate of local authority figures as a result may not add up to the relevant regional total.

Attachments:

1. 88361_88362_PDF [88361_88362 table - children looked after at 31 March in semi-independent living or living independently.pdf]

Tulip Siddiq: [88371]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, under what circumstances it is permitted for a child in care to be placed in a unregulated residential care setting.

Tulip Siddiq: [88372]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of children in care placed in unregulated residential settings.

Vicky Ford:

The Children Act (1989) set out that the assessment of a child's needs to inform his or her care, or pathway plan, may conclude that for some children, these needs will be best met by a placement in 'other arrangements'. When local authorities place young people in 'other arrangements', such as independent or semi-independent provision (often referred to as unregulated or unregistered), they are responsible for ensuring the placement provides the level of support the young person needs. It is not in accordance with the legislation to place a looked after child in a setting that does not meet their needs and keep them safe, and it is unacceptable for any child or young person to be placed in such a setting.

We are concerned about increases in the number of children under the age of 16 being placed in this type of provision. Many children in the care system under the age of 16 are very vulnerable and often have complex needs. We do not believe that independent and semi-independent settings can meet all of these needs and, therefore, children of this age should not be placed in these settings under any circumstances. While local authorities have local measures in place to quality assure the provision, the quality of the provision is variable, and does not always meet the needs of young people and keep them safe. We know that young people placed in this provision are more likely to go missing and can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

We have consulted on a set of ambitious proposals including banning children under the age of 16 from being placed in unregulated accommodation and how to enforce new national standards for providers to drive up quality, keeping young people safer

and delivering better outcomes

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/unregulated-provision-for-children-in-care-and-care-leavers>). We will be responding to this consultation and setting out our plans for ensuring the high-quality of unregulated semi-independent and independent accommodation in due course.

Tulip Siddiq:

[88373]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many serious incident notifications his Department has received in each of the last 12 months regarding children in care placed in (a) unregistered and (b) unregulated accommodation.

Vicky Ford:

Local authorities do not provide serious incident notification data broken down by 'unregistered' or 'unregulated' accommodation. They do however provide information on lodgings and semi-independent settings, which are unregulated. Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, the department received 21 serious incident notifications where the local authority stated the child was resident in lodgings or a semi-independent unit at the time of the incident.

We have consulted on a set of ambitious proposals including banning children under the age of 16 from being placed in unregulated accommodation and how to enforce new national standards for providers to drive up quality, keeping young people safer and delivering better outcomes. More information is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/unregulated-provision-for-children-in-care-and-care-leavers>.

We will be responding to this consultation and setting out our plans for ensuring the high-quality of unregulated semi-independent and independent accommodation in due course.

■ Children: Protection

Colleen Fletcher:

[91067]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to help local authorities improve their support for vulnerable children.

Vicky Ford:

The department aims to provide world-class education, training and care for everyone, whatever their background. We work closely with local authorities to make sure that everyone has the chance to reach their potential and to live a more fulfilled life.

We currently have an improvement system which seeks to identify local authorities with children's services at risk of failing and to work collaboratively with them to put in place targeted support to help them improve the services they provide to vulnerable children and families.

Working closely with the sector, we have identified areas where help is needed to avoid failure, funding good local authorities to provide peer support on children's

services through the Partners in Practice programme to more than 80 authorities, with work underway to broker support for many more. We are investing £3 million over the 3 years to March 2021 to support leadership across children's services, working with the Local Government Association. 146 local authorities out of a total of 151 have benefited from the programme.

Since the programme rolled out in November 2017, we have identified many local authorities who would benefit from additional help to avoid the risk of potential failure and have provided immediate support. As a result, we have seen an overall improvement in the quality of children's services as judged by Ofsted. At the end of August 2020, 50% of local authorities were judged Good or Outstanding at their most recent inspection. This is 14 percentage points higher than the proportion judged Good or Outstanding following each authority's first inspection under the previous Ofsted framework.

The department also acts quickly and decisively to intervene in local authorities found to be failing in their delivery of children's services and judged Inadequate by Ofsted. Our intervention brings results: the first children's services trust in Doncaster moved from Inadequate to Good in just 2 years, and after almost a decade of deeply entrenched failure, children's services in Birmingham are no longer Inadequate. Where we have intervened and provided support, other local authorities have moved from Inadequate to Good, such as Rotherham and Barnet. All the local authorities judged Inadequate that were inspected in 2019 subsequently improved to be Good or Requiring Improvement.

Our aim is to continue the improvements we are making at pace so that, by 2022, less than 10% of local authorities are rated Inadequate by Ofsted, halving failure rates within 5 years and providing consistently better services for thousands of children and families across the country.

Similarly, our vision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is the same as for all children – that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college, that they find employment, lead happy and fulfilled lives, and experience choice and control. We are driving high performance across local area SEND services, aiming for 75% of areas delivering good quality SEND services. We are working closely with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to identify areas of weakness through the Interim Visits programme and the current inspection cycle. To reflect our ambitious programme of improvement in this area, we have commissioned a new, rolling cycle of Area SEND inspections to commence in 2022.

In relation to helping local authorities improve support for vulnerable children during the COVID-19 outbreak, the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable children has always been our priority. This is why nurseries and colleges have remained open to them because it the safest place for them to be.

Over recent months, we have worked across the government to improve what we know about the children and young people who are most at risk. We have worked closely with local authorities to improve our understanding of how COVID-19 is

impacting children's social care services across the country and how we can best support or challenge individual councils to protect the most vulnerable children in their care.

Regional Education and Children's Teams (REACT) have been established to better co-ordinate how the department captures information and intelligence about local needs and circumstances in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, including in relation to vulnerable children, whilst offering support where it is needed.

More widely, during March and April 2020, the government provided £3.2 billion of emergency grant funding and over £5 billion of cashflow support to support local authorities with the COVID-19 outbreak.

On 2 July, the government announced a new comprehensive package of support to address spending pressures and in recognition of lost income. A further £500 million brought funding, given to support local councils with pressures, to £4.3 billion. This funding is un-ringfenced, recognising local authorities are best placed to decide how to meet the major service pressures in their local area, including support for children's services, that have been caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Education: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[\[87592\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had to enable local authorities to lead recovery in the education sector as covid-19 lockdown restrictions are eased.

Nick Gibb:

The Department is working to support local authorities in their education, early years and children's social care roles. Department for Education ministers and officials continue to engage regularly with representatives of local authorities about their role and the Department's Regional Education and Care Teams continue to meet with local authorities to understand and tackle barriers to school attendance.

To help the system and local authorities monitor and respond to possible increases in demand for their services, the Department is continuing to deploy Ofsted inspectors and Partners in Practice resources to support local authorities most in need of extra help with children's social care services.

The Department is providing a package of support totalling £4.3 billion to help meet the immediate COVID-19 related pressures, including in children's social care and in delivering services for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

The Department is continuing to convene the early years COVID-19 local authority working group on a regular basis to discuss issues relating to the recovery of the early years sector and the role of local authorities.

■ Educational Institutions: Sanitary Protection

Ruth Cadbury: [\[89723\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to make the free period product scheme compulsory for secondary schools in England.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[89724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, in the event of an eligible institution not using all of its allocated funding under the period product scheme, whether the remaining funds will roll over for use in 2021.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[89725\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding has been made available under the free period products scheme for schools in 2020 to date.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[89726\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the amount his Department will spend under the free period products scheme by the end of 2020.

Ruth Cadbury: [\[89727\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much funding will be made available for the free period products scheme in 2021.

Vicky Ford:

On 20 January 2020, the department launched a new scheme which makes free period products available for state-funded primary schools, secondary schools and colleges in England. The scheme remained in operation during partial school and college closures, and these organisations are still able to order a range of period products and distribute them to learners.

This scheme is in place to ensure that no learner misses out on education due to their period, and we continue to work with our delivery partner, phs, to encourage engagement with the scheme. Schools and colleges should have period products available should learners need them, and they may choose to order products through this scheme or through an alternative route.

Each eligible organisation has been allocated a budget for the scheme in 2020 based on 35% of the number of learners whose legal gender is female and who, based on age, are likely to have started their period. 35% is an assumed take-up rate, reflecting the fact that not all learners will have a need for products all of the time. This mirrors the assumed take-up rate used in the scheme to provide learners in Scotland with access to free period products. The total amount spent through the scheme will depend on the value of period products ordered by schools and colleges.

We are continuing to monitor the scheme closely and we will make information available about any extensions or changes to the scheme in due course.

■ Free School Meals

Tulip Siddiq:

[91683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to provide free school meals to eligible children over the (a) autumn half-term and (b) Christmas holiday period.

Vicky Ford:

The government has taken unprecedented and substantial action to ensure that children do not go hungry as we take measures to tackle coronavirus, including in relation to free school meals.

In the first instance, we asked schools to support eligible pupils by providing meals or food parcels through their existing food providers wherever possible. For circumstances where this was not possible, we established a national voucher scheme and the COVID-19 Summer Food Fund to support schools and families during this difficult time while schools were restricted from opening to all pupils. Our national voucher scheme supplier, Edenred, have reported that over £380 million worth of voucher codes had been redeemed into supermarket eGift cards by families through the scheme as of 19 August. Over 20,350 schools had placed orders for the scheme as of 28 July. Now schools and their kitchens are open, normal free school meal provision has resumed, enabling children to have a nutritious healthy meal at school. As set out in our guidance, schools are able to support pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals who have to remain at home due to self-isolation with food parcels. Our latest guidance for schools is set out here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>.

While schools were restricted from opening to all pupils, we continued to support families in recognition of the unprecedented levels of disruption and uncertainty for schools during this time; however, provision for free schools meals is ordinarily term time only and there is no requirement for schools to continue this provision during school holidays.

This summer, our £9 million Holiday Activities and Food Programme worked across 17 local authorities, providing thousands of children with access to healthy meals and enriching activities and building on the success of the 2018 and 2019 programmes. We are currently assessing the scheme in order to ascertain the best way to provide children with activities as well as food during the holiday period. Our 2020 programme will help show how free provision can be coordinated in different local areas and it will provide valuable information about what works in supporting this sector in future. Future policy and spending decisions will be set following completion of the current Spending Review.

The government has put in place a range of support for families. The Department for Work and Pensions have increased Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by over £1,000 a year for this financial year, benefiting over 4 million households, and increased Local Housing Allowance rates – putting an average of £600 into people's pockets. Families facing hardship can access the Local Authority Emergency

Assistance Grant which includes £63 million for local authorities to help those who are struggling financially due to the impact of COVID-19. This will allow authorities to step in and provide discretionary financial help to those facing severe hardship to allow them to pay for food and other necessities. This funding will sit alongside the £6.5 billion extra support the government is already providing through the welfare system to ensure the most vulnerable in our society are protected throughout this crisis. Additionally, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are providing £16 million for food support for the most vulnerable people as delivered through charities including FareShare and WRAP.

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[91762]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many children in England are (a) eligible and (b) registered for free school meals.

Vicky Ford:

As of the schools January 2020 census, the number of children known to be eligible for benefits-related free school meals in England was 1,440,778. Additionally, at the same census point, a further 1.4 million received a free meal under the Universal Infant Free School Meal policy. More information is available here: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>.

■ **Holiday Play Schemes: Free School Meals**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[91763]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to implement a national holiday activities and food programme during the 2021 school summer holidays.

Vicky Ford:

This summer, our £9 million Holiday Activities and Food Programme worked across 17 local authority areas, providing thousands of children with access to healthy meals and enriching activities, building on the success of the programme in 2018 and 2019.

Future policy and spending decisions will be set following completion of the current Spending Review.

■ **Home Education**

Rachael Maskell:

[83871]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many pupils will be home educated in September 2020 compared to September 2019 (a) nationally and (b) in York.

Nick Gibb:

The information requested is not held by the Department.

Local authorities have a duty to check electively home educated children are in receipt of a suitable education. Individual local authorities may hold data on the

number of children they know to be electively home educated within the authority area.

Robert Halfon:

[\[90118\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent estimate he has made of the number of school-age children in England whose parents have elected to educate them at home; and what the sources are for that data.

Robert Halfon:

[\[90119\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the number of parents in England who elect to home-educate their school age children; and what plans his Department has to monitor that effect.

Nick Gibb:

The Department does not collect statistics on the number of children in home education.

In relation to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department is working closely with local authorities to encourage a return to full attendance in school and is monitoring the situation. Initial conversations with local authorities indicate that the majority have noticed an increase in enquiries from parents about home education. Where parents are anxious about the safety of their children returning to school, local authorities and school leaders are reinforcing that it is in the best interests of pupils to return to school.

■ **Members: Correspondence**

John Spellar:

[\[90041\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to respond to the correspondence of 16 June 2020 from the hon. Member for Warley on his constituent Angela Turner.

Nick Gibb:

I can confirm that a response has been sent to the letter dated 16 June, from the right hon. Member for Warley.

■ **Pre-school Education: Coronavirus**

Tulip Siddiq:

[\[91680\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many covid-19 home testing kits have been supplied to early years settings; and when his Department plans to order more testing kits for those settings.

Vicky Ford:

All schools, including primary schools with nurseries and local authority-maintained nurseries have received an initial batch of home testing kits. This included:

- 9,730 schools with nurseries; and
- 388 local authority nursery schools.

The home testing kits are for those who develop the symptoms of COVID-19 and face significant barriers to accessing a test.

All schools, including primary schools with nurseries and local authority-maintained nurseries are able to order additional test kits via the online portal that opened on 16 September.

■ Pupils: Coronavirus

Rachael Maskell:

[90177]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) nursery, (b) primary and (c) secondary school children have been (i) sent home or (ii) remained at home due to displaying covid-19 symptoms for each day of September 2020.

Nick Gibb:

Keeping close track of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools is a priority for the Government. The Department is currently collecting data from schools on a daily basis, as well as gathering information from local areas and following up with individual settings to confirm that procedures for requiring pupils to isolate are well understood and that necessary decisions are made on the basis of public health advice.

The Department collects data on the number of schools that have indicated that they have sent children home due to COVID-19 containment measures and have attendance data for schools that have done so. We are currently looking at the quality of the data with a view to publishing it as part of the official statistics series. The series includes published data on school openings and attendance, which shows that over 99.9% of state-funded schools were open on 10 September and that attendance in state-funded schools was 88%. More information is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/attendance-in-education-and-early-years-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>.

From the autumn term, pupils in all year groups have now returned to school full time. Our latest guidance on full opening sets out the public health advice schools should follow and how we expect schools to operate in the autumn term. The department's guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>.

Public Health England (PHE) leads in holding data on infection, incidence and COVID-19 cases overall. PHE have published data on COVID-19 incidents by institution, including educational settings, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-covid-19-surveillance-reports> (page 16).

■ Runshaw College

Rosie Cooper:

[90089]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what reparations are available to a student who received incorrect A-level results as a result of a clerical error by Runshaw College

which resulted in the student missing out on a university place and who is now being told they are unable to resit their second year of college.

Nick Gibb:

Appeals against A and AS level and GCSE grades are being accepted from schools or colleges where they think the exam board did not apply its procedures properly and fairly or where the data used by the exam board to calculate results contained an error.

Ofqual has published summary guidance, agreed with school and college leaders, which makes clear what the process was for putting together centre assessment grades and the grounds of appeal which are available.

I understand the college has been in touch with the student to see if they wish to enter the autumn exam series. The Department has launched an Exam Support Service which will provide support for schools and colleges to run the autumn exams.

■ **Schools: Breakfast Clubs**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[\[91764\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans the Government has to continue the National School Breakfast programme beyond March 2021.

Vicky Ford:

The department is investing up to £35 million into the National School Breakfast Programme. This includes our extension of the programme by a further year until March 2021, with up to £11.8 million being invested during this current financial year. Overall, this money will kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in up to 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas, making them sustainable in the long run. Any further investment in school breakfast clubs beyond March 2021 is subject to the upcoming Spending Review.

■ **Schools: Coronavirus**

Julie Elliott:

[\[86656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what financial support is being made available to schools which must return to online learning as a result of a covid-19 outbreak in the school.

Nick Gibb:

In the last academic year, the Government invested over £100 million to help schools and young people continue their education at home and access social care services. This included investment of over £14 million on technical support which allows schools to use cloud based education platforms, nearly £6 million to support a new EdTech demonstrator school network, and over £85 million to provide laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers to children who would not otherwise have access.

The Department is also making an initial further 150,000 laptops and tablets available to schools in the event that their ability to deliver face to face education is disrupted

during the new academic year. These should be used to enable disadvantaged children in year 3 to year 11 to continue to access remote education. We are also funding expert technical support to help schools apply for support to access one of two free-to-use digital education platforms to enable online teaching: G Suite for Education or Office 365 Education.

Schools can also spend their catch up premium on contingency planning for remote learning, for example purchasing additional devices or more textbooks. The Education Endowment Foundation COVID-19 Support Guide includes support for schools in how to support effective remote learning and access to technology.

■ Sixth Form Colleges: Portsmouth

Stephen Morgan:

[90217]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect on the ability of sixth form colleges in Portsmouth to remain open of recent trends in the number of sixth form students in Portsmouth unable to obtain a covid-19 test and unable to return to their sixth form until they receive covid-19 test results.

Gillian Keegan:

It is vital that students and college staff only get a test if they develop COVID-19 symptoms. If a positive case is confirmed in a college, swift action is being taken to ask those who have been in close contact to self-isolate, and Public Health England's local health protection teams continue to support and advise colleges in this situation.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) sent an initial supply of 10 test kits to all colleges including sixth form colleges, for those who develop symptoms on site and face significant personal barriers to accessing a test and so would not otherwise seek to get tested. Further education colleges can now place a monthly order for additional test kits, with order limits proportionate to their number of students. We are making this increase in the number of kits available so that colleges are able to prioritise testing for symptomatic staff who cannot access a test - so that if they test negative they can get back to work as quickly as possible and help keep their setting open.

We will work with DHSC to provide updates to our guidance with advice on how to distribute these kits safely. Relevant guidance can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-home-test-kits-for-schools-and-fe-providers/coronavirus-covid-19-home-test-kits-for-schools-and-fe-providers>.

■ Students: Loans

Olivia Blake:

[90300]

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of extending maintenance loans to distance learners.

Michelle Donelan:

Loans for living costs are not available to students on distance learning courses such as those offered by the Open University, except in cases where a student is undertaking a course by distance learning because they are unable to attend the course in person for a reason relating to their disability.

Loans for living costs were introduced for students attending part-time courses at honours degree or equivalent level from the 2018/19 academic year onwards but not for part-time distance learning courses such as those offered by the Open University.

The government remains committed to tackling the decline in part-time undergraduate higher education. The independent panel's report on the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding was published in May 2019. We are considering the recommendations of the Augar Report, including those relating to part-time and flexible learning, as part of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding, and plan to respond at the forthcoming Spending Review.

Teachers: Coronavirus**James Murray:**[\[91811\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether (a) primary school teachers and (b) other teaching staff who have been in contact with a school bubble in which there has been a confirmed case of covid-19 and who have been asked to self-isolate but are asymptomatic are eligible for a covid-19 test.

Nick Gibb:

Unless an individual has been specifically asked to do so by a clinician, it is vital that only those who have developed symptoms of COVID-19 get tested. The NHS Test and Trace system must stay focused on testing those with symptoms of COVID-19. The test is most effective for those who are experiencing symptoms.

Anyone who is self isolating as a result of being a close contact of a confirmed case but does not have symptoms should not request a test. This includes if that case was identified in school or college.

The latest clinical advice is that testing of individuals without symptoms should only be used where clinically appropriate, predominantly for outbreak investigation and infection control. This risk based approach ensures that testing is targeted where it is most effective.

All children, young people and staff have access to a test if they display symptoms of COVID-19 and should get tested in this scenario.

Teachers: Labour Turnover**Alex Sobel:**[\[90232\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of changes in the level of retention of newly qualified teachers since March 2018.

Nick Gibb:

The Department publishes the retention rates of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) annually in the School workforce in England statistical release, available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-workforce-in-england>.

Of the teachers who qualified in 2018, 85.4% are still in service one year after qualification. This retention rate is slightly higher than the previous year when the one year retention rate was 85.1%.

Improving early career teacher retention is one of our priorities. This is why the Department launched the Early Career Framework (ECF) alongside our landmark Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy last year. The ECF will transform the support offered to NQTs by extending the induction period to two years, and will include funding 5% of time away from the classroom for teachers in the second year of teaching so that they can focus on their development. Funding for mentor training and time for them to support their inductees in the second year of induction, as well as training and development resources will also be provided. Early roll out in Bradford, Doncaster, Greater Manchester and the North East began this month and, in response to the disruption to teacher training due to COVID-19, has been expanded by making the high quality training materials available nationally a year early. Full national roll out will take place from September 2021.

■ Teachers: Training**Alex Sobel:****[90231]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many people have received teaching bursaries since March 2018.

Nick Gibb:

The published data shows that in the 2018/19 academic year, 10,685 trainees on postgraduate initial teacher training courses were eligible for a bursary.

Data for the 2019-20 academic year will be published in summer 2021.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**■ Agriculture: Forests****Alex Sobel:****[90233]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he is taking to (a) support the growth of agroforestry, and (b) ensure that sector receives adequate funding.

Rebecca Pow:

Agroforestry can help towards our climate commitments, protect and improve biodiversity, support healthy soils and productive farms, and improve waterways by creating riparian woodlands.

We recently consulted the public on proposals for a new England Tree Strategy, including how to expand the use of agroforestry. The final strategy, based on analysis of these responses, will include proposals to support agroforestry.

■ Agriculture: Shropshire

Daniel Kawczynski:

[90985]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to support the farming industry in Shropshire.

Victoria Prentis:

This Government is committed to supporting our farming industry. Our ambition is for this country to have a thriving, self-reliant and resilient farming sector.

The Government appreciates that the food and farming sectors are currently facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and is grateful for the hard work farmers have done to maintain food supplies

In response to the pandemic, we introduced a range of measures to support the agriculture sector, including farmers and agricultural businesses in Shropshire. These included: easements to competition law to help producers get food where it was needed; a dairy support scheme; support for various AHDB promotional campaigns and the opening of intervention and storage aid schemes for various products.

Employees in the food sector were also designated as key workers and there has been a temporary relaxing of the normal rules on drivers' hours, enabling the sector to keep supply chains running, including deliveries from farm gate to processors.

Farmers have also, where eligible, been able to apply for public support through the various Covid-19 related Government schemes including the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, business rates relief, Coronavirus [Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#) and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

■ Animal Welfare: Sentencing

Sarah Champion:

[90132]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what progress he has made in bringing forward legislative proposals to introduce five-year maximum sentences for acts of animal cruelty in England and Wales.

Victoria Prentis:

The Government is supporting the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill as it makes its way through Parliament. Second Reading of the Bill is scheduled for 23 October. The Bill will increase the maximum custodial penalty for animal cruelty from six months' imprisonment to five years' imprisonment.

The new maximum penalty of five years is in line with campaigns by key stakeholders such as Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Dogs Trust and the RSPCA. This is a positive step forward in improving animal welfare and will act as a serious deterrent against cruelty and neglect. Northern Ireland has already set the maximum penalty

for animal cruelty offences at five years' imprisonment, and the Scottish Government has now passed the Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Act 2020. The Welsh Government has confirmed that the new maximum penalty being proposed should apply in Wales. The increase to five years' imprisonment will provide one of the toughest sanctions in Europe, strengthening the UK's position as a global leader on animal welfare.

■ Clothing: Waste

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90265\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 2 September 2020 to Question 77811, whether his Department holds the data supporting the WRAP's claim on their Sustainable Clothing Action Plan website that the 2020 commitment currently has over 90 signatories and supporters representing more than 48 per cent of UK retail sales by volume.

Rebecca Pow:

WRAP keeps Defra informed of the overall proportion of UK fashion retail sales by volume covered by the fashion retailers who are part of the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan. The data used by WRAP was collected by Kantar Wordpanel and is commercially available from them. Defra does not hold the data.

■ Developing Countries: Poaching

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90268\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what proportion of Official Development Assistance is being made available to help reduce the reliance of communities in developing countries on poaching.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK Government is at the forefront of international efforts to protect endangered animals and plants from poaching and illegal trade. Defra's current Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) budget is approximately 7% of Defra's SR15 ODA budget. This includes an uplift of £2.5m from FCDO in 2019 and 2020.

In addition, at the UN Climate Action Summit (UNCAS) in September 2019, the PM announced a new £220 million international biodiversity fund, which will include £30 million in further funding to tackle the Illegal Wildlife Trade. This commitment almost doubles Defra's IWT budget over the next three years. FCDO have also committed a further £3.5m uplift to Defra's IWT budget over the next Spending Review period.

Defra has also invested £92m into the Global Environment Facility (GEF) during the SR15 period. The GEF is a multilateral organisation that delivers a wide range of programmes to tackle global environmental issues including the Global Wildlife Program which is a global partnership on wildlife conservation and crime prevention for sustainable development.

■ Exclusive Economic Zone: Environment Protection

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[91786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, if he will publish information on the (a) known and (b) potential areas within the UK's exclusive economic zone of sensitive or vulnerable deep-sea habitats for (i) coldwater corals, (ii) deep-sea sponges, (iii) mud and sand emergent epifauna, (iv) bryozoan patches and (v) xenophyophore patches.

Rebecca Pow:

Information on the extent, or area covered, and distribution of marine habitats is currently publicly available in different formats.

Created by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in 2018, UKSeaMap provides a broad-scale overview of the coverage of different physical seabed habitats in the UK. In addition to this, the JNCC's UK Marine Protected Area mapper portal provides up to date detailed information on the known distribution and extent of sensitive deep-sea habitat types such as deep-sea sponge aggregations and cold-water corals, and also provides information on their protection status. Through the Canyons Marine Conservation Zone, located in the far south-west of the UK, Defra is protecting the only known example of cold-water corals within English waters, so action is being taken. All other instances of cold-water corals in the UK are recorded from Scottish waters such as the Rosemary Bank Seamount, East & North West Rockall Bank, Anton Dhorn Seamount and Darwin Mounds.

We are also currently in the process of mapping and analysing data on the condition of biogenic reefs, hard structures made up of living organisms, and underwater rocky communities, specifically looking at those habitats with sensitive emerging epifauna, such as corals and sponges. The results are not yet publicly available, although we are in the process of finalising the report for external publication.

■ Fish: Exports

Luke Pollard:

[\[90242\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the Government applied to the EU for third country status and agreement to export fish and fish products; and what progress has been made on that application.

Victoria Prentis:

The UK's application for third country listing for live animals & Products of Animal Origin was submitted 27 March 2020. On 16 June 2020 the EU requested further information on the UK legislation and the SPS rules that will apply from 1 Jan 2021. The UK responded to the Commission on 20 July 2020.

The UK successfully gained listing previously (prior to EU exit dates) and there has been no change to the UK's status (in terms of animal disease) and on this basis we remain confident of achieving listed status. Our application, including the evidence dossiers will be discussed by Member States at the EU Committee on Plants,

Animals, Food and Feed (SCOPAFF) and we are expecting an update by 14/15 December 2020.

Luke Pollard:

[90243]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether fish and shellfish landed directly on the quayside from UK vessels onto vivier lorries and then transported to the EU will (a) meet the European Commission's Export Health Certificate requirements or (b) will need to have been through an approved establishment after 1 January 2020 prior to shipment.

Victoria Prentis:

Products of animal origin, including fishery products and shellfish, exported to the EU after the end of the transition period will need an export health certificate, signed by an appropriately qualified certifying officer. It is for the certifying officer to determine whether the particular consignment meets the requirements of the certificate. Like most products of animal origin, they will need to be exported via an approved premise prior to shipment.

Generally speaking, transport operations are considered exempt from approval requirements in food law. However, a transport vehicle may be approved, providing the vehicle in question falls within the scope of approval and meets the relevant requirements of Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 and Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004. Approval decisions are the responsibility of local authorities.

■ Litter: Waste Disposal

Stuart Anderson:

[90245]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to support (a) litter picks and (b) other community-based anti-litter schemes.

Rebecca Pow:

The Government continues to use its influence to support national clear-up days, which help to empower and engage communities in tackling this problem and to change attitudes towards littering.

This month, we are encouraging as many people and businesses as possible to participate in the Great British September Clean and Great British Beach Clean, while following Government guidance on staying safe outside your home.

Community-based anti-litter projects have also been supported through the Litter Innovation Fund, which was launched in 2018 to pilot and evaluate innovative new ways to tackle litter. This was jointly funded by Defra and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. A total of 28 small-scale local anti-litter projects were awarded through the scheme, which was unfortunately disrupted earlier this year due to coronavirus restrictions.

Reports from the first-round projects, and the list of successful applicants in the second round, are available from the Waste and Resources Action Programme's website: www.wrap.org.uk/content/litter-innovation-fund.

Defra also support several anti-litter campaigns, including the national “Keep It, Bin It” and “Love parks” campaigns run by Keep Britain Tidy, and our own “Respect the outdoors” campaign which launched this summer.

■ **Sewage: Waste Disposal**

Martyn Day:

[\[90188\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the accuracy of reports in the Guardian newspaper in its article entitled Nearly 30,000 tonnes of sewage sludge containing human waste to enter UK, published on 2 September 2020; and if he will make a statement.

Rebecca Pow:

The Sludge Use in Agriculture Regulations provides controls that protect the environment and human health when these organic materials are spread to land.

The use of sewage sludge in agriculture is regulated by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency has reviewed the risks and limitations of the regulatory framework and issued a bespoke landspreading mobile plant permit to handle sludge from the Netherlands.

Provided the use of sewage sludge is carried out in accordance with the relevant regulatory controls and good practice guidance is followed, the recycling of sewage sludge to land remains a safe activity.

We are working to implement the Environment Agency’s Sludge Strategy to bring sludge and septic tank sludge into the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations, by 2023. This will enable better management of the environmental impacts of landspreading sludge, and modernise the regulatory framework surrounding the treatment, storage and safe use of sludge.

■ **Territorial Waters: Environment Protection**

Stephanie Peacock:

[\[91787\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, how many areas of less than 800 metres depth in UK territorial waters have been closed to bottom trawling following identification of a vulnerable marine ecosystems since the implementation of the Deep-sea Access Regulation (EU) 2016/2336.

Victoria Prentis:

The deep-sea access regulation provides the European Commission with delegated powers to establish a list of areas where Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) are known or likely to occur below a depth of 400m. Once identified, those areas will be closed to fishing with bottom gears in accordance with the regulation. The Commission requested advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) in October 2019, and details of a related ICES workshop report and the advice request can be found at the links below. The workshop report also includes a summary of existing VME protection measures through national conservation initiatives, including in UK waters (ref. pages 8 and 9).

<http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Expert%20Group%20Report/Fisheries%20Resources%20Steering%20Group/2019/WKREG/WKREG2019.pdf>

http://www.ices.dk/sites/pub/Publication%20Reports/Advice/2019/Special_Requests/eu.2019.19.pdf

The UK, while still a Member State, submitted UK-related VME data to assist the implementation process of the deep-sea access regulation. When ICES provides its advice the Commission will proceed with implementation in EU waters. As this will happen after the end of the transition period the UK will be in a position to develop the retained regime in our waters from next year, taking the ICES UK-related advice into consideration as we do so.

■ Water Voles: South West

Anthony Mangnall:

[90267]

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps he has taken to support populations of water voles in the South West.

Rebecca Pow:

Water vole are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 meaning it is an offence to kill, injure or take a wild water vole as well as damage or destroy places it uses for shelter, as well as disturb them while occupying these. In addition water vole are a priority conservation species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which requires public authorities to have regard to the species when carrying out their day to day functions.

Natural England published '[A Review of the Population and Conservation Status of British Mammals](#)', which identifies and confirms areas of work where continued resource should be placed to conserve and enhance water vole populations.

The Environment Agency works with partners to deliver water vole recovery projects at a number of sites across the South West, including habitat improvements, mink control, surveying and reintroductions. The Agency has partnered with the Westland Countryside Stewards and Biffa to repopulate the Bude catchment. Since summer 2012, approximately 550 water voles have been released. The reintroduction programme is promising with sightings in almost all release sites, as well as sites where they have moved into. Field sightings suggest that the water vole population is stable and the project has been successful. In addition, the River Tale in East Devon now also supports a stable population of water vole following a recovery project in the area.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE**■ CDC: Azalai Hotels****Navendu Mishra:**[\[78895\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much funding has been invested by the CDC Group in Azalai Hotels Group to date.

James Duddridge:

CDC's investment into Azalai is centred on creating jobs and stability in some of the world's most challenged countries: Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, and Cote d'Ivoire. Since 2015 the company has created over 150 new permanent jobs in the formal economy. In addition to job creation, the investment has wider benefits to the local and national economies. For example, by purchasing locally sourced goods and services and by improving economic infrastructure.

CDC's investment into Azalia is via two funds: AfricInvest III and Cauris Croissance. CDC's partnership model, investing through fund managers, helps it achieve impact at scale by supporting hundreds of SMEs across Africa and South Asia. In addition to backing local teams of investors, and equipping them with strong Environmental, Social and Governance practises, the model helps support the development of self-sustaining local finance markets.

CDC publishes the amounts it invests directly into businesses and into investment funds on its website www.cdcgroup.com. Amounts invested by fund managers into individual companies are not published as this information is commercially sensitive.

■ Developing Countries: Water**Luke Pollard:**[\[91718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what plans he has to help improve (a) water and (b) hygiene infrastructure in developing states.

Wendy Morton:

Improving water, sanitation and hygiene is necessary to meet the UK ambition to end preventable deaths by 2030. The UK continues to fund the provision of safe water, sanitation and hygiene interventions across the globe, including responding to outbreaks of disease such as COVID-19, cholera and ebola.

UK funding has meant that over 62.6 million people across 30 countries have gained access to drinking water or a toilet since 2015. Action on hygiene, particularly hand and surface hygiene, is particularly important in the COVID-19 response and recovery. The UK Government's partnership with Unilever seeks to improve hygiene in 37 countries in response to the pandemic.

■ Human Rights: Females

Mr Barry Sheerman:

[\[91569\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to raise the profile of women's rights internationally; and whether he plans to organise international events and conferences on that matter after the covid-19 outbreak.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is widely recognised for its leadership on gender equality and women and girls' rights. The challenges of advancing girls' education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's political empowerment and participation, women's economic empowerment, and ending gender-based violence, including conflict related sexual violence, are more acute now, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We continue to engage virtually with our international partners and champion gender equality in multilateral fora including in the UN. Promoting gender equality and advancing women and girls' rights on the international stage are core elements of the UK's role as a force for good in the world. This October marks the 20th anniversary of UN Security Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The FCDO network will mark the anniversary, focusing on elevating and legitimising the work of women peacebuilders. The UK will co-lead the new global Generation Equality Action Coalition on gender-based violence to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on Gender Equality. We will drive more concerted, coordinated and scaled-up global action across the international system to prevent gender-based violence. We remain unwavering in our commitment to enabling all girls to access 12 years of quality education by 2030. We are continuing to consider the range of possible activities in these respects after the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ Hygiene: Schools

Stephen Kinnock:

[\[88877\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to prioritise hygiene and hand-washing in schools in his Department's development programmes and projects.

Wendy Morton:

The UK is playing a leading role supporting hygiene and hand-washing with soap in schools in at least 37 developing countries.

We are working closely with civil society, business and research organisations to provide guidance and advice, use communication channels to promote hygiene, support the establishment of hand-washing facilities, and provide essential hygiene supplies including soap and sanitiser.

■ Iran: Capital Punishment

Dr Matthew Offord:

[\[91010\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what representations he has made to his Iranian counterpart on the continued use of the death penalty in that country.

James Cleverly:

The UK Government is firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country, including Iran, especially in cases that do not meet the minimum standards defined by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory. This includes the execution of minors and the use of the death penalty for a crime that is not deemed "the most serious". We have made clear to Iran, both in public and in private, our opposition to the use of the death penalty and will continue to do so.

■ Iran: Human Rights

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90262\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Amnesty International report on torture in Iran, published on 2 September 2020, what steps he is taking to help reduce human rights abuses in that country.

James Cleverly:

The findings in Amnesty International's report about the November 2019 protests are deeply worrying. Iran's human rights record continues to be of serious concern to the UK. As we said at the time, we unreservedly support the right to peaceful protest, and call on Iran to uphold its commitments under international law to protect freedom of assembly and speech. The UK is committed to holding Iran to account on a wide range of human rights issues, through contact with the Iranian Government and internationally through the UN and our likeminded partners. We regularly raise human rights with the Iranians at all levels and we continue to take action with the international community to press Iran to improve its poor record on all human rights issues.

■ Overseas Aid

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90263\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether it remains Government policy to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on Official Development Assistance.

James Cleverly:

The Government is committed to spending 0.7% of our national income on development assistance. It is a manifesto commitment and is enshrined in law.

■ Overseas Aid: Peacekeeping Operations

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90261\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help reform OECD guidance on the use of Official Development Assistance in funding peacekeeping operations.

James Cleverly:

Peace and security are the basis for all development - as recognised in Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. Peacekeeping plays a vital role.

In 2017, UK leadership at the OECD Development Assistance Committee helped deliver important reforms on the use of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for peacekeeping. This included doubling the percentage of contributions to UN peacekeeping missions in ODA eligible countries that count as ODA.

We continue to review potential for reform and are looking at how our aid budget can be used most effectively and strategically through the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

■ Pakistan: Religious Freedom

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[89659\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the compatibility of blasphemy laws in Pakistan as they are applied in practice with freedom of religion for those practising minority religions in that country.

Nigel Adams:

We remain deeply concerned about reports of discrimination against religious minorities in Pakistan. We regularly raise at a senior level our concerns regarding the issue of the blasphemy laws with the authorities in Pakistan. The UK's position on the death penalty is well known - we are firmly opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances. We will continue to urge the Government of Pakistan to guarantee the fundamental rights of all its citizens, in accordance with international standards. Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon last raised our human rights concerns, including Freedom of Religion or Belief and the protection of minority religious communities, with Pakistan's Minister for Human Rights, Dr Shireen Mazari, on 27 August.

■ Rohingya: Diplomatic Relations

Ms Lyn Brown:

[\[89647\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his Department's diplomatic policy on the Rohingya people of the reported testimonies of (a) Zaw Naing Tun and (b) Myo Win Tun in the International Criminal Court Investigation ICC-01/19.

Nigel Adams:

We are aware of the reported testimonies of two soldiers from the Myanmar military, Private Myo Win Tun and Private Zaw Naing Tun.

We are clear that the Myanmar military bears responsibility for atrocities against the Rohingya and other minorities. There has been no meaningful accountability for these acts. On 6 July, the UK listed the Myanmar Military's Commander-in-Chief and Deputy Commander-in-Chief under the Global Human Rights sanction regime (GHR), for overseeing the systematic and brutal violence against the Rohingya and other minorities, as set out in the Independent Fact Finding Mission Report. This is in addition to the sanctions which the UK secured through the EU, against 14 members of the Myanmar military responsible for serious human rights violations. The UK is clear that accountability is essential to any long-term progress on the crisis.

■ Sudan: Floods**Harriett Baldwin:**[\[89693\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he plans to introduce UK Aid Match to support charitable giving for the people of Sudan following the recent flooding in that country.

James Duddridge:

DFID has provided UK Aid Match funding to 10 emergency humanitarian appeals since 2013, most recently the DEC Coronavirus appeal. There are no plans to use UK Aid Match to support charitable giving for the people of Sudan following the recent flooding. However, UK aid-funded relief items are already at work in response to the widespread flooding that is occurring in Sudan. In partnership with aid agencies, the UK is providing emergency shelter, water and hygiene kits as well as blankets and sleeping mats. We will continue to take preventative action including against disease.

■ Syria: Migrant Camps**Jim Shannon:**[\[91044\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what support his Department is providing to Syrian refugee camps to help tackle the spread of covid-19.

James Cleverly:

At the Brussels IV 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region' conference in June, the UK committed at least £300 million for 2020 to support Syria and the region, including Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. This will help to limit the spread of Coronavirus and mitigate its direct and indirect effects. With rising case numbers and high levels of vulnerability, we are helping refugees and those displaced from their homes because of conflict or humanitarian crises to help tackle the disease. This includes providing access to health services and medical supplies, improving shelters so people displaying symptoms can isolate, and making sure that there are

adequate hygiene supplies and facilities for hand washing in camps and large settlements.

The UK has to date dedicated £764 million to the global fight against Coronavirus and British expertise to stop the spread of the global Coronavirus outbreak, find a vaccine and save lives around the world.

■ **Yemen: Tankers**

Anna McMorris:

[91788]

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has prepared a contingency plan in the event that the abandoned FSO Safer oil tanker off the coast of Yemen capsizes.

James Cleverly:

We remain deeply concerned by the deteriorating state of the FSO SAFER oil tanker. The Foreign Secretary raised the tanker's dire condition, which poses an environmental, economic and humanitarian threat to Yemen and the region, during the P5+ High Level Ministerial meeting on 17 September. The Houthis urgently need to grant access to the tanker so that the UN can inspect the vessel and carry out any much needed repair work. The UK is working with the UN and other donors to ensure the mission proceeds and that comprehensive UN contingency plans are in place should a leak occur.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

■ **Antenatal Care: Coronavirus**

Marsha De Cordova:

[89844]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to publish guidance on allowing partners to attend antenatal appointments and scans during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The National Health Service is making arrangements to ensure that women are supported and cared for safely through pregnancy, birth and the period afterwards during this pandemic.

NHS England and NHS Improvement published a new Framework to assist NHS trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in English maternity services on 8 September which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/09/par001599-framework-for-the-reintroduction-of-visitors-throughout-maternity-services-sep-2020.pdf>

We expect trusts to use this Framework and consider as a priority how access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women can be reintroduced whilst maintaining the safety of all service users, staff and visitors.

Marsha De Cordova:

[89845]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many local trusts and other NHS bodies are permitting partners to attend (a) scans and (b) other antenatal appointments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not hold data on the numbers of trusts allowing partners to attend routine antenatal appointments, including scans. On 8 September 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement published a Framework to assist all National Health Service trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in maternity services in England, developed in partnership with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Royal College of Midwives and the Society and College of Radiographers. NHS England and NHS Improvement expect trusts to now use this Framework and consider how access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women can be safely reintroduced to maternity services as a priority.

The Framework document is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/09/par001599-framework-for-the-reintroduction-of-visitors-throughout-maternity-services-sep-2020.pdf>

Marsha De Cordova:

[89847]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many risk assessments have been (a) carried out and (b) published regarding decisions on allowing partners to attend antenatal (i) scans and (ii) other appointments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement do not hold data on local risk assessments.

Rachael Maskell:

[90184]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make it his policy to allow all pregnant women to have a partner attend hospital and anti-natal appointments throughout their pregnancy during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The National Health Service is making arrangements to ensure that women are supported and cared for safely through pregnancy, birth and the period afterwards during this pandemic.

NHS England and NHS Improvement published a new Framework to assist NHS trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in English maternity services on 8 September which is available at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/09/par001599-framework-for-the-reintroduction-of-visitors-throughout-maternity-services-sep-2020.pdf>

We expect trusts to use this Framework and consider as a priority how access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women can be reintroduced whilst maintaining the safety of all service users, staff and visitors.

■ Brain Cancer: Research

Hilary Benn: [86546]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much has been allocated from the public purse to research on glioma brain tumours in each of the last five years.

Edward Argar:

The Department's National Institute for Health Research reports expenditure on glioma brain tumour research in each of the last financial years is shown in the following table:

2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
£1.29 million	£1.40 million	£1.69 million	£1.94 million	£2.12 million

■ Care Homes: Primary Health Care

Daniel Kawczynski: [81731]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department has taken to ensure that care homes have access to adequate primary care support.

Jo Churchill:

From 1 May, NHS England and NHS Improvement put in place a comprehensive package of primary care support to care homes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including all care homes having a named clinical lead. NHS clinical commissioning groups were asked to take immediate steps to implement consistent weekly care home 'check ins' (carried out remotely wherever appropriate) in order to review patients identified as a clinical priority for assessment and care, drawing on general practice and community services staff.

■ Chief Medical Officer: Coronavirus

Judith Cummins: [88328]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, on how many occasions he has overruled the advice of the Chief Medical Officer on decisions relating to local restrictions during the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: The Joint Biosecurity Centre's contain framework outlines how the process for national decision-making works. The Chief

Medical Officer chairs the Silver Committee. The remit of this group is to “assess the latest national and local epidemiological picture” and “review and evaluate local outbreak responses and consider further action or escalation”. The Gold Committee chaired by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is the decision-making body and the Chief Medical Officer is a permanent member of this group. More information the process is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>

■ Childbirth

Marsha De Cordova:

[89846]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what definition of labour is used by (a) local trusts and (b) NHS bodies.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement endorses the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence’s definitions of all stages of labour which can be found in Clinical guideline [CG190] on Intrapartum care for healthy women and babies. We expect all National Health Service trusts and bodies to give due regard to the guidance, but we do not collect data on the definitions that trusts use.

■ Compulsorily Detained Psychiatric Patients: Ethnic Groups

Marsha De Cordova:

[89849]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many Black people are in psychiatric custody; how long they have been in psychiatric custody; and what assessment he has made of the reasons for the use of that custody.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

In 2018/19 there were 5,137 people detained under the Mental Health Act 1983 whose ethnicity was recorded as Black or Black British. Analysis of length of stay and length of detention has not yet been undertaken. This analysis is complex and as such would exceed the proportionate costs available to answer this question.

Detentions are made under the Mental Health Act 1983 to enable the treatment of patients who require care in hospital for their mental health and who may otherwise present a risk to themselves or others. The operation of the Mental Health Act 1983 is regulated by the Care Quality Commission, which produces an annual report, Monitoring the Mental Health Act, the most recent edition of which is available at the following link:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/major-report/monitoring-mental-health-act-201819>

■ Coronavirus: Bradford**Judith Cummins:****[88329]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he overruled the advice of the Chief Medical Officer on removing local restrictions due to the covid-19 outbreak in parts of the Bradford District.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 14 September 2020]: The Joint Biosecurity Centre's contain framework outlines how the process for national decision-making works. The Chief Medical Officer chairs the Silver Committee. The remit of this group is to "assess the latest national and local epidemiological picture" and "review and evaluate local outbreak responses and consider further action or escalation". The Gold Committee chaired by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is the decision-making body and the Chief Medical Officer is a permanent member of this group. More information the process is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>

Judith Cummins:**[88330]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the advice of the Chief Medical Officer on removing local restrictions due to the covid-19 outbreak in parts of the Bradford District.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: The Joint Biosecurity Centre's contain framework outlines how the process for national decision-making works. The Chief Medical Officer chairs the Silver Committee. The remit of this group is to "assess the latest national and local epidemiological picture" and "review and evaluate local outbreak responses and consider further action or escalation". The Gold Committee chaired by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care is the decision-making body and the Chief Medical Officer is a permanent member of this group. More information the process is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/containing-and-managing-local-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreaks/covid-19-contain-framework-a-guide-for-local-decision-makers>

■ Coronavirus: Death**Dr Matthew Offord:****[91012]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether there have been incidences where his Department has instructed hospital doctors and general practitioners to record the cause of death on death certificates as died with covid-19 or suspected of having covid-19 in cases where tests have not been carried out to confirm the actual cause of those deaths.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Medical practitioners are required, whether in an emergency or non-emergency period, to certify causes of death to the best of their knowledge and belief.

In response to the provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 in relation to death certification, the General Register Office/Home Office and the Office for National Statistics published revised guidance to medical practitioners completing medical certificates cause of death (MCCD) for a period of emergency. This guidance confirms that COVID-19 is an acceptable direct or underlying cause of death for the purposes of completing the MCCD.

■ Coronavirus: Disease Control**Andrew Gwynne:**[\[85968\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits for the understanding of long-term covid-19 symptoms of contacting people who tested positive for covid-19 four weeks later to ask whether they have returned to baseline health.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: The Government, as well as our expert scientific groups, continues to monitor and assess data from a wide variety of sources to better understand the disease course of COVID-19.

In July, the National Health Service launched the 'Your COVID Recovery' service to support the recovery of people who have been in hospital or suffered at home with the virus. This is a two-phase endeavour with Phase 1 being available as an open, publicly available site containing general information on all aspects of recovering from COVID-19, including physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. Phase 2 will be launched this autumn and will be available to people who are assessed and referred by a healthcare professional.

The National Institute for Health Research and UK Research and Innovation have also invested £8.4 million in the Post-HOSPitalisation COVID-19 study (PHOSP-COVID), which seeks to understand why some patients develop longer-term health problems. This is one of the world's largest comprehensive research studies into the long-term health impacts of COVID-19 on hospitalised patients.

Justin Madders:[\[86685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the Observer newspaper article of 6 September 2020 on the leaked Public Health England report on covid-19 lockdown restrictions, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of that report.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: The NHS Test and Trace service is helping us to keep the spread of the virus at low levels by ensuring that we can quickly trace close recent contacts of anyone who tests positive for COVID-19. This is playing an

important role in helping ease restrictions but alongside the vital continuing importance of social distancing.

We are working closely with local authorities and local Directors of Public Health, sharing highly localised case data on a daily basis to understand and tackle local outbreaks. All 152 upper tier local authorities have created and shared their Local Outbreak Control Plans which focus on prevention, identification and management of outbreaks, and working to break the chain of transmission. We have also given councils £300 million in new dedicated funding to support their dedicated Local Outbreak Plans.

Mr Steve Baker:

[88304]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the changing distribution of covid-19 cases across different (a) age groups and (b) demographic groups; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

Public Health England publishes a surveillance report each Friday which details trends in case rates amongst different age groups, Index of Mean Deprivation quintiles, and ethnicities, as well as across different regions in England.

The latest report from 11 September (week 37) states that case rates are highest in the 20-29 years age group. Positivity rates have increased in all age groups and regions. A particularly steep increase in positivity has been observed in over 85-year olds tested through Pillar 2.

Among young adults there has been a shift in the demographic of cases in recent weeks from the highest rates among those in the most deprived groups towards those in the least deprived groups.

The report and data are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/weekly-covid-19-surveillance-report-published>

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[88333]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the criteria on which he bases decisions to impose local covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Infection rates and other data are closely monitored to get a picture of what is happening in local areas, to allow us to decide whether restrictions should be changed, eased or strengthened.

We are required to review local restrictions regularly, usually every two weeks.

A wide range of metrics are used to monitor the incidence of COVID-19 nationally and in local areas and progress made in tackling outbreaks. These are reviewed every day and are considered in light of both the changing national picture and the reports on the ground on how situations are being managed. The Contain Framework Watchlist is published every week and a variety of supporting data is published alongside this, including case data and maps of local authorities on the watchlist.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[88334]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the criteria on which he bases decisions on when to lift local covid-19 lockdown restrictions.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Infection rates and other data are closely monitored to get a picture of what is happening in local areas, to allow us to decide whether restrictions should be changed, eased or strengthened.

We are required to review local restrictions regularly, usually every two weeks.

A wide range of metrics are used to monitor the incidence of COVID-19 nationally and in local areas and progress made in tackling outbreaks. These are reviewed every day and are considered in light of both the changing national picture and the reports on the ground on how situations are being managed. The Contain Framework Watchlist is published every week and a variety of supporting data is published alongside this, including case data and maps of local authorities on the watchlist.

Rebecca Long Bailey:

[88336]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will (a) set out the decision-making process for decisions to impose local covid-19 lockdown restrictions on areas with high rates of covid-19 infections and (b) publish the evidence base on which those decisions are taken.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Infection rates and other data are closely monitored to get a picture of what is happening in local areas, to allow us to decide whether restrictions should be changed, eased or strengthened.

We are required to review local restrictions regularly, usually every two weeks.

A wide range of metrics are used to monitor the incidence of COVID-19 nationally and in local areas and progress made in tackling outbreaks. These are reviewed every day and are considered in light of both the changing national picture and the reports on the ground on how situations are being managed. The Contain Framework Watchlist is published every week and a variety of supporting data is published alongside this, including case data and maps of local authorities on the watchlist.

Julian Sturdy:

[89683]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what advice his Department assessed before devising the rule of six; during the covid-19 outbreak; and whether his Department made an assessment of the potential merits of other capacities.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As the Prime Minister set out, if we are to beat the virus then everyone, at all times, needs to limit social contact as much as possible. We are seeing daily case numbers rise rapidly and across the country, which is why the Government, the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser jointly agreed the changes we announced.

The rules have been simplified and strengthened so they are easier to understand, and so the police can identify and disperse illegal gatherings. We are also acting now to get the virus under control and, if we achieve that, we may be able to make changes and potentially lift the restrictions.

Julian Sturdy: [\[89684\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department has set a timetable for reviewing the covid-19 restrictions announced on 9 September 2020.

Julian Sturdy: [\[89685\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish a timetable for easing the rule of six in stages to allow larger groups to meet as infection rates fall.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is keeping its social distancing measures under continual review and will only make changes when we are confident we can do so safely.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care keeps the restrictions and requirements under constant consideration, to ensure the measures continue to be both proportionate and necessary. The Government will continue to issue guidance to support the public.

Julian Sturdy: [\[89686\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department made of the potential merits of exempting children from the covid-19 restrictions announced on 9 September 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We have set out a clear and consistent limit of six people of any age in all settings. This makes things easier to understand for the public and easier to enforce by the police and public health officials.

Health is a devolved matter, and each administration has the discretion to manage the risks as they see fit.

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[90035\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will publish the (a) evidential and (b) scientific basis for tightening restrictions on gatherings in the open air in England under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No 2) (England) (Amendment) (No 4) Regulations 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: We have taken swift action to limit the gathering group size to six people, against the backdrop of an increase in cases and infection levels across the country.

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) provides Ministers and officials with evidence-based scientific advice in emergencies based on a range of

sources. SAGE has published the statements and the accompanying evidence to demonstrate how our understanding of COVID-19 has continued to evolve as new data merges, including the role that social interaction plays in transmission.

The work of the Joint Biosecurity Centre also supports the wider Test and Trace system to identify outbreaks and trends of COVID-19. Data on COVID-19 is published daily at the following link:

<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

■ **Coronavirus: Mental Health**

Mohammad Yasin:

[82253]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional support the Government is providing to support the mental health of (a) frontline workers, (b) people from different Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and (c) young people in response to the covid-19 outbreak.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government recognised at the start of the pandemic the need for enhanced wellbeing support for National Health Service and social care staff and commissioned NHS England and NHS Improvement to develop a comprehensive emotional, psychological and practical support package for NHS staff. Wherever possible we have ensured the same offer is included in the support package that developed for the social care workforce.

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working closely with key stakeholders and people with lived experience to support information sharing to encourage timely access to NHS mental health services and improve people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds' experiences of these services.

We are working to ensure that all children and young people who have or who develop mental ill health can access support if they need to and that schools and colleges, parents and carers can support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing over the coming weeks and months.

The Government has also provided £9.2 million of additional funding for mental health charities to support adults and children. This includes charities that offer support to BAME communities and charities like Young Minds.

The Government's £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme will support school staff to respond to the emotional and mental health pressures some children and young people may be feeling.

■ **Coronavirus: North East**

Alex Cunningham:

[81878]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information his Department holds on the potential link between higher covid-19 death rates and regional health inequalities in the North East.

Alex Cunningham:[\[81879\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to tackle regional health inequalities.

Jo Churchill:

The recent reviews published by Public Health England and data published by the Office for National Statistics emphasise that we must do more to level up health across the country and reduce health inequalities.

The Government is determined to address long-standing inequalities by progressing work under the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Equalities (Kemi Badenoch MP) and through the Prime Minister's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities.

■ **Coronavirus: Quarantine**

Sir Mark Hendrick:[\[81558\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the number of (a) British and (b) foreign travellers that have been fined for breaching quarantine rules following arrival to England from a non-exempt country in the last two months.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Department does not collect this information.

■ **Coronavirus: Research**

Layla Moran:[\[91712\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to allocate resources to the Government's rapid, comprehensive study of long covid.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: The Department invests £1 billion per year in health research through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). Together with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the NIHR has invested £8.4 million in the Post-HOSPitalisation COVID-19 study (PHOSP-COVID), investigating the long-term health impacts of coronavirus on hospitalised patients. To ensure the best use of National Health Service resources for clinical research during the acute phase of the pandemic, the NIHR established a process to prioritise COVID-19 research as Urgent Public Health Research. The NIHR Clinical Research Network is supporting prioritised studies by fast tracking their local set-up, management and delivery. PHOSP-COVID was prioritised through this process on 1 July 2020.

On 31 July, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care convened a roundtable meeting with researchers and clinicians to establish what more can be done to understand and mitigate the long-term health effects of COVID-19. The Department recognises the need for further research into the longer-term effects of the virus in those who did not require hospitalisation and is currently considering options for future work in this area.

■ Coronavirus: Screening

Justin Madders:

[52116]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many people were tested for covid-19 from 20 May to 31 May 2020 inclusive.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 4 June 2020]: The 'people tested' measure was initially used to count people who had not been previously received a test, deliberately excluding subsequent instances an individual would have been tested if they had been tested once or more previously. It no longer usefully reflects the volume of tests carried out as, for example, a healthcare worker receiving their second, third or fourth test since the start of the pandemic would not be counted as they have been tested once before. Therefore, the people tested figure will be published on a weekly, rather than daily, basis within the NHS Test and Trace statistics at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

Caroline Lucas:

[59732]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's announcement of 19 May 2020 on social media that data for the number of people tested was unavailable, when (a) daily and (b) cumulative figures will be reported; and for what reasons those figures have not been reported since 22 May 2020.

Helen Whately:

The 'people tested' measure was initially used to count people who had not been previously received a test, deliberately excluding subsequent instances an individual would have been tested if they had been tested once or more previously. It no longer usefully reflects the volume of tests carried out as, for example, a healthcare worker receiving their second, third or fourth test since the start of the pandemic would not be counted as they have been tested once before. Therefore, the people tested figure will be published on a weekly, rather than daily, basis within the NHS Test and Trace statistics at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-test-and-trace-statistics-england-weekly-reports>

Mr Laurence Robertson:

[85934]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the number of covid-19 test results which are lost; what steps he is taking to reduce that number; and if he will make a statement.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 10 September 2020]: NHS Test and Trace is successfully protecting the nation from COVID-19 by breaking chains of transmission through testing, contact tracing, and outbreak management.

There are no recorded clinical incidents of data loss through the digital testing process. There are a number of reasons why a result may appear lost, including tests being returned without a barcode, where the registration process (which links samples to an individual) hasn't been completed or is entered inaccurately making it impossible to reconcile the test to a subject.

Stella Creasy: [\[89687\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the contract with Serco for managing access to covid-19 testing, what penalties can be imposed under that contract in the event that people cannot secure a test; and who is responsible for monitoring the performance of that contract.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: Serco is contracted to operate a proportion of the test locations. It is not responsible for the scheduling of access to COVID-19 tests.

Contractual penalties are generally unenforceable under English law and are therefore not included in this contract.

Stella Creasy: [\[89688\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the contract with Deloitte for managing access to covid-19 testing, what penalties can be imposed under that contract in the event that people cannot secure a test; and who is responsible for monitoring the performance of that contract.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: The contract with Deloitte does not include managing access to COVID-19 testing.

Stella Creasy: [\[89689\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the contract with Randox for managing access to covid-19 testing, what penalties can be imposed under that contract in the event that people cannot secure a test; and who is responsible for monitoring the performance of that contract.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: The contract with Randox relates to the performance of laboratory testing following receipt of test samples. It does not relate to the public being able to secure a test.

Contractual penalties are generally unenforceable under English law and are therefore not included in this contract.

Stella Creasy: [\[89690\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the contract with Lighthouse Labs for managing access to covid-19 testing, what penalties can be imposed under that contract in the event that people cannot secure a test; and who is responsible for monitoring the performance of that contract.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: The contract with the Lighthouse Labs relates to the performance of laboratory testing following receipt of test samples. It does not relate to the public being able to secure a test.

Contractual penalties are generally unenforceable under English law and are therefore not included in this contract.

■ Coronavirus: Vaccination**Liz Saville Roberts:****[90196]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the changes proposed in his Department's consultation on changes to Human Medicine Regulations to support the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, how long the proposed temporary authorisation of the supply of an unlicensed vaccine is planned to last.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The preferred route to enable deployment of a new vaccine for COVID-19 is through the usual marketing authorisation (product licensing) process. If a suitable COVID-19 vaccine candidate, with strong supporting evidence of safety, quality and efficacy, becomes available, we will seek to license that vaccine through the usual route. Any temporary authorisation of the supply of an unlicensed vaccine would be by exception and the timing of this would depend on the public health need.

■ Crematoriums: Coronavirus**Esther McVey:****[81864]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the maximum number of 30 attendees for large events during the covid-19 outbreak (a) applies to both local authority and privately run crematoria and (b) is enforceable; and who is responsible for enforcing attendance limits within private crematoria.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

From 14 September 2020 there is a gathering limit of six people in England with set exemptions, including attending funerals. This exemption applies in both private and local authority crematoria, but limits the gathering to 30 people. Some premises may limit capacity further based on how many people they can safely accommodate with social distancing in place. The police currently have responsibility for enforcing the gatherings provisions.

We expect crematoriums to follow the guidance to protect mourners.

Further guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/covid-19-guidance-for-managing-a-funeral-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

■ Dental Services

Mick Whitley:

[82419]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of how many and what proportion of dental surgeries have been able to return to operating at full capacity.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 September 2020]: Dental practices have been able to open for face to face National Health Service care, including routine care, from 8 June. The guidance from NHS England and NHS Improvement to NHS contract holders was clear that the pace of the restart should be only as fast as possible compatible with maximizing safety for patients and dental staff. Dental practices must follow Public Health England guidance on infection protection control procedures (IPC) and appropriate levels of personal protective equipment.

No dental practices are currently delivering at full capacity due to the greater IPC required to safely deliver dental care while COVID-19 is circulating in the community.

A copy of the IPC guidance can be found at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/910885/COVID-19_Infection_prevention_and_control_guidance_FINAL_PDF_20082020.pdf

■ Dental Services: Coronavirus

Esther McVey:

[81860]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that dentists will soon be able to provide (a) services that involve the use of aspirators and (b) other services currently not permitted during the covid-19 outbreak.

Esther McVey:

[81861]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will provide clearer guidance to dentists on what services they are able to provide during the covid-19 outbreak; and whether dentists are permitted to make their own risk assessments on what services they can deliver.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 September 2020]: Dentists are already able to provide all treatments, including aerosol generating procedures, where they can do so safely. NHS England and NHS Improvement has issued a series of guidance notes setting out the personal protective equipment and infection control procedures required to deliver the full range of dentistry safely while COVID-19 is still circulating in the community. Routine National Health Service dental treatment was suspended during the pandemic peak and face to face urgent care was restricted to over 600 urgent dental centres to minimize risk of transmission. NHS England and NHS Improvement guidance at the end of May authorized a restart of NHS care including routine care

from all practices from 8 June. Dentists have been encouraged to reopen as fast as possible as is compatible with safety.

Detailed guidance has been issued to dentists as they reopen for face to face care. The guidance can be found at the following link:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/preparedness-letters-for-dental-care/>

All dentists, whether offering NHS or private care, are responsible for ensuring the care they offer is safe. Dentistry is regulated by the Care Quality Commission and the General Dental Council as well as, for NHS dentistry, NHS England and NHS Improvement.

Esther McVey:

[81862]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to guidance for dentists on the requirement to have air circulation equipment during the covid-19 outbreak, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of providing support to dentists who need to purchase that equipment.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 September 2020]: Dental practices have been able to open for face to face National Health Service care, including routine care, since 8 June. The guidance from NHS England and NHS Improvement to NHS contract holders was clear that the pace of the restart should be only as fast as possible compatible with maximizing safety for patients and dental staff.

Dental practices must follow Public Health England guidance on infection protection control procedures (IPC) and appropriate levels of personal protective equipment. IPC recommendations include minimizing risk of transmission during or following aerosol generating procedures. However, the guidance does not require dentists to buy equipment to force air changes. The guidance sets out the length of time a room needs to be rested between treatments and the circumstances where that time can be reduced by forcing air changes. It is for practices to consider whether they wish to reduce that time. For their NHS activity dentists are receiving their full funding during this restart period without any expectation that they deliver a given number of treatments. The requirement is that they are open to patients and deliver as much care as they safely can, given their individual surgery set ups. Where the dentistry provided is private not NHS any investment in equipment or practice is a matter for the dentist concerned.

Mick Whitley:

[82420]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect on public health of people not being able to access dental surgeries during the covid-19 lockdown.

Jo Churchill:

To meet the Government social distancing measures and to contain the spread of COVID-19 all routine dentistry was suspended during the height of the pandemic. All

face to face urgent care was restricted to over 600 urgent dental centres (UDCs) to minimize risk of transmission and all clinically necessary treatments were still available in UDCs during the lockdown period.

NHS England and NHS Improvement advised patients to get in touch with NHS 111 or their usual dentist who provided remote advice and triaged patients needing treatment to the UDCs across England.

■ Dental Services: Laboratories

Daniel Kawczynski: [\[81724\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if the Government will help support dental laboratories by paying them their average lab element fees.

Jo Churchill:

During the suspension of routine dentistry during the pandemic peak there was almost no demand for dental laboratory products. Demand continues to be significantly reduced post lock down as there is continued reduced activity in both National Health Service and private dentistry due to the need for heightened infection controls.

Dental laboratories do not receive funding from the NHS. Dentists, whether NHS or private, contract directly with laboratories as third party suppliers. It is therefore not possible for the NHS to direct NHS funding to laboratories for work not commissioned by dentists. However as private companies, laboratories were and are entitled to the full range of financial support from the Treasury available to private sector businesses and individuals affected financially by COVID-19.

■ DNANudge: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes: [\[86718\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he made of the (a) financial viability and (b) resilience of DNA Nudge prior to the award of a Government contract with a value of £161 million.

Helen Hayes: [\[86720\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what (a) financial, (b) scientific accuracy and (c) other due diligence checks were carried out before the award of Government contracts to DNA Nudge.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: Financial due diligence of DNA Nudge was conducted during the procurement process before awarding a contract. Financial and commercial analysis was undertaken of the business model before it was assessed that the organisation was able to deliver.

The product went through a clinical validation process that confirmed DNA Nudge test met the quality standard required and the product has obtained approval from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

DNA Nudge's resilience and ability to deliver has also been tested through an initial pilot successfully delivered. A pilot was first conducted with an order of 40 machines deployed to seven London hospitals initially which was delivered successfully.

Helen Hayes:

[\[86719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will set out the procurement process for the Government's contract with DNA Nudge to deliver technology to rapidly detect covid-19.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 11 September 2020]: The contract award notice was published on Official Journal of the European Union on 31 July and the Department awarded the contract following a negotiated procedure without prior publication under the provisions of Regulation 32(2)(c) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

■ **Down's Syndrome: Screening**

Sir Desmond Swayne:

[\[90024\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will review the effect of Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing for Down's Syndrome on the number of children born with Down's Syndrome.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The national evaluative roll out for non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) as part of the NHS Foetal Anomaly Screening Programme is yet to be implemented. Once rolled out, the programme will be able to monitor how the introduction of NIPT is working at each stage of the screening pathway and data will be collected on the choices women make regarding screening and/or diagnosis.

■ **Electronic Cigarettes: Coronavirus**

Alex Sobel:

[\[84341\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of vaping on the transmission of covid-19.

Jo Churchill:

There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is more likely to be transmitted via passive exposure to cigarette smoke or e-cigarette vapour. However, being in close proximity to anyone with an active infection would carry a risk of infection regardless of whether they are smoking or vaping.

■ **Endometriosis: Research**

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[91656\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of funding allocated to research on endometriosis.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: In the last five financial years to 2019-20, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and UK Research Innovation (UKRI) have awarded £8.52 million for research into endometriosis. This includes a wide range of projects from basic science through to applied health research into diagnosis, treatment and service delivery.

Both the NIHR and UKRI welcome funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including endometriosis; it is not usual practice to ring-fence funds for particular topics or conditions. Applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

■ Foetal Anticonvulsant Syndrome**Sir Christopher Chope:****[89609]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to support people with Foetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder; and when he plans next to meet the Independent Foetal Anti-Convulsant Trust.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: Recommendation five of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review, which was published on 8 July, outlines that specialist centres should be set up to provide comprehensive treatment, care and advice for those adversely affected by medications taken during pregnancy. The Government has received the report and all recommendations are being considered carefully. An update will be provided in due course.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Innovation (Lord Bethell) met with the Independent Foetal Anti-Convulsant Trust on 28 August. Currently there are no future appointments arranged.

More generally, the Government is committed to providing disabled people and those with health conditions the support they are entitled to and plans to publish a health and disability support Green Paper in due course.

■ Food: Labelling**Sarah Champion:****[89709]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government plans to consult people (a) with lived experience of eating disorders and (b) experts in the field of eating disorders before introducing calorie labelling on menus.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: We recognise concerns about calorie labelling and are committed to striking a careful balance between informing and educating people to make healthier choices whilst not negatively impacting people with eating disorders or those in recovery from eating disorders. We will continue to meet with experts and those with lived experience of eating disorders as we develop our plans.

■ Funerals: Coronavirus

Julian Sturdy:

[88307]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether funeral receptions and wakes will be exempt from the covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced on 9 September 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: Up to 30 people can attend funerals. This does not include wakes. Wakes are included in the revised guidelines of up to six people only.

■ Gambling

Mr Richard Holden:

[82540]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the steps needed to treat gambling-related harm as a public health matter.

Jo Churchill:

Public Health England (PHE) is carrying out an evidence review on the prevalence of gambling and associated health harms and their social and economic burden. It is expected to be published in March 2021. The full scope of the PHE gambling-related harms evidence review can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review-scope>

■ General Practitioners: Coronavirus

Stuart Anderson:

[82402]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what safeguards he is putting in place to ensure that vulnerable and elderly people have access to GP surgeries during and following the covid-19 outbreak.

Jo Churchill:

General practice continues its vital role in supporting high-risk patients with ongoing care needs, including those who have been in the 'shielding' cohort, those who may need to shield in future, care home residents and those needing COVID-19 aftercare and support.

Following NHS England and NHS Improvement guidance issued on 31 August on moving to Phase 3 in the response to COVID-19, all general practitioner practices must offer face-to-face appointments at their surgeries as well as using remote triage and video, online and telephone consultation wherever appropriate – whilst also considering those who are unable to access or engage with digital services.

In addition, general practices should restore activity to usual levels where clinically appropriate, and reach out proactively to clinically vulnerable patients and those whose care may have been delayed.

■ General Practitioners: Medical Records

Chi Onwurah: [\[90130\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether in response to the covid-19 outbreak there have been changes to the opt-out options for citizens to choose whether they wish to share their GP patient data throughout the NHS.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The Government has made no changes to patients' ability to opt out of confidential patient information, held on them by general practitioner practices and being used for purposes other than their individual care in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

■ Genetics: Chronic Illnesses

Fleur Anderson: [\[90281\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) social, (b) economic and (c) personal effects of (i) beta-thalassaemia and (ii) chronic genetic illnesses on the communities in which those illnesses occur.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: NHS England, as the commissioner of services for patients with beta-thalassaemia and other chronic genetic illnesses, is not responsible for assessing the social, economic and personal effects of the conditions on the communities in which they occur. However, all service specifications and policies are developed in conjunction with stakeholders, including patient groups and patient representatives, and all are subject to engagement and consultation.

■ Haemochromatosis: Medical Treatments

Sir John Hayes: [\[88826\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure each NHS Trust is equipped with the (a) expertise and (b) resources needed to treat haemochromatosis.

Edward Argar:

Services for the care and treatment of patients with hemochromatosis are commissioned by clinical commissioning groups which determine the National Health Service trust level element of expertise and resources to treat this condition.

Genetic testing services or other specialised services may however be involved in the diagnosis of this condition. This would be as a result of a specific referral for genetic

testing. The Genomic Medicine Service is supported by the National Genomic Test Directory which specifies the genomic tests that are commissioned by the NHS in England. Genetic haemochromatosis is included in the Test Directory.

■ Health

Mary Kelly Foy:

[\[83957\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure the continuity of health improvement work referred to in the July 2019 Green Paper entitled Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: The Prevention Green Paper, 'Advancing our health: Prevention in the 2020s' outlined commitments with varying timelines, regarding the services we receive, the choices we make and the conditions in which we live. The Green Paper consultation closed on 14 October 2019 and attracted over 1,600 responses. The Government response to the consultation, with more detail on progress against the Green Paper commitments, has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government intends to publish the response in due course.

■ Health Professions: Infectious Diseases

Helen Hayes:

[\[82196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many (a) consultants in communicable disease control and (b) community infection control nurses are working in those roles in each local authority area for the most recent period for which such information is available.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not hold the information requested.

■ Hormone Replacement Therapy

Sarah Champion:

[\[88876\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the cause of the national shortage of Hormone Replacement Therapy products in the UK; and what steps he is taking to prevent a further shortage of the products.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is aware of supply issues that have affected some hormone replacement therapy (HRT) preparations for various reasons including regulatory or manufacturing issues and commercial decisions made by some companies to divest some products. While a limited number of HRT products are currently affected, most HRT products including alternatives to those experiencing supply issues are currently available.

We have been working closely with all suppliers of HRT medicines to maintain overall access to patients and have provided regular updates about these issues and management advice to the National Health Service. The overall situation has been improving since the end of February 2020 and will continue to improve in the coming months.

■ Hospitals: Coronavirus

Justin Madders: [\[82033\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of (a) national, (b) regional and (c) local healthcare worker covid-19 infections can be attributed to transmission at work from (i) patients and (ii) other healthcare workers.

Justin Madders: [\[83842\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many and what proportion of patients have been confirmed as infected with covid-19 (a) admission to hospital and (b) as a result of admission to hospital in (i) total and (ii) each month since the start of the outbreak.

Emma Hardy: [\[84339\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will publish data collected on the transmission of covid-19 within hospitals.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: Data is not currently available in the format requested.

■ In Vitro Fertilisation

Emma Hardy: [\[90211\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential merits of reinstating the ability for sperm banks to deliver to residential addresses in the UK.

Helen Whately:

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which is the United Kingdom regulator for assisted conception treatments, has not made any recent assessment. Its Code of Practice on quality and safety requirements for the supply of cryopreserved sperm for home insemination is updated on a regular basis. The Code states that: 'Sperm should be supplied for insemination at home (or another unlicensed site) only in exceptional circumstances'.

Colleen Fletcher: [\[91071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether decisions by clinical commissioning groups to decommission fertility services contravene the principle of equality of access to NHS services.

Helen Whately:

The level of provision of local health services available to patients, including fertility treatment is a matter for local healthcare commissioners. Clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have a statutory responsibility to commission healthcare services including fertility services that meet the needs of their whole population. In respect of National Health Service fertility services, the Government have been consistently clear that we expect CCGs to commission fertility services in line with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines, so that there is equal access across England. The Government has also been consistently clear that not providing any routine fertility service for in vitro fertilisation is unacceptable.

Discussions are continuing with NHS England about how these equity issues can best be addressed.

■ Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review**Valerie Vaz:**[\[90121\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to implement the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review are being considered carefully.

The Government will provide an update in due course.

■ Influenza: Vaccination**John Spellar:**[\[81513\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much his Department has budgeted for the 2020-21 flu vaccination campaign; how many doses have been ordered; and from (a) which companies and (b) where the vaccines will be produced.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 September 2020]: Public Health England's media spend for the 2020 - 2021 influenza vaccination campaign budget is £4.15 million. The Department has agreed to procure 7.65 million additional doses of seasonal flu vaccine to date and continues to work with suppliers to increase the size of this additional stock. This is in addition to the stock that general practitioners and pharmacists have ordered directly from manufacturers for the adult programme.

The contracts for the additional vaccine are with Aventis Pharma Limited (T/A Sanofi), Mylan UK Healthcare Ltd, GlaxoSmithKline UK Ltd and Seqirus UK Ltd.

Production of the vaccine will include a number of processes. Some aspects include processing in the United Kingdom and some overseas.

Derek Twigg:

[81539]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent discussions he has had with pharmaceutical companies on their capacity to (a) develop and (b) supply an adequate quantity of flu vaccines in winter 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 3 September 2020]: The manufacturing of the flu vaccines is a complex biological process. In February, each year, the World Health Organization makes recommendations on the composition of the flu vaccine for the northern hemisphere based on its international surveillance programme. It takes six-eight months to manufacture the vaccines and following regulatory clearance they start to become available to service providers at the start of the flu season in September.

In relation to the supply of vaccine for the adult programme, general practitioners and pharmacists are directly responsible for ordering flu vaccine from suppliers which are used to deliver the national flu programme to adults. To support plans to expand the flu vaccination programme this winter we have engaged with flu vaccine manufacturers to ensure an adequate quantity of flu vaccines are available this winter.

Sir Alan Campbell:

[81582]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure everyone in the at risk groups receives a flu vaccine in 2020.

Jo Churchill:

The flu vaccination programme 2020/21 will be supported with a new marketing campaign to encourage take up amongst groups eligible for the free flu vaccine, due to launch in early October. Resources for the campaign will be available to download and order from the Public Health England (PHE) Campaign Resource Centre at the following link:

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/>

Joint communications from PHE, the Department and NHS England and NHS Improvement will include targeted messages to help drive uptake in those eligible, including at-risk groups, while addressing the potential challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Department, PHE and NHS England and NHS Improvement have published the Annual Flu letter 2020/21 to ensure that local areas have plans to deliver activities to encourage those in at risk groups to have the vaccine. The latest letter is available at the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907149/Letter_annualflu_2020_to_2021_update.pdf

Helen Hayes:

[82202]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to maximise the take up of the influenza vaccine in 2020.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with local areas to ensure that regional teams have plans in place to increase coverage of the flu vaccination this winter. In addition to developing the existing system of providing vaccinations through general practice, community pharmacies, schools, community and other National Health Service settings to reach new cohorts and increase uptake in existing cohorts; new models of delivery have been shared with regional commissioning teams to encourage innovative thinking such as mobile and mass vaccination models to allow for increases in uptake safely whilst observing social distancing and personal protective equipment requirements.

Additional flu vaccine has been purchased by the Department which will be available to providers to facilitate expansion of the programme.

Ruth Jones:[\[82381\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to maximise the take up of the influenza vaccine in 2020.

Jo Churchill:

NHS England and NHS Improvement are working with local areas to ensure that regional teams have plans in place to increase coverage of the flu vaccination this winter. In addition to developing the existing system of providing vaccinations through general practice, community pharmacies, schools, community and other National Health Service settings to reach new cohorts and increase uptake in existing cohorts; new models of delivery have been shared with regional commissioning teams to encourage innovative thinking such as mobile and mass vaccination models to allow for increases in uptake safely whilst observing social distancing and personal protective equipment requirements.

Additional flu vaccine has been purchased by the Department which will be available to providers to facilitate expansion of the programme.

Derek Twigg:[\[84149\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many flu vaccines (a) were administered to patients in 2019-20 and (b) he estimates will be required for winter 2020-21.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: In 2019/20, 15.3 million people received the flu vaccination. This included those aged 65 and older, those in at risk groups, pregnant women, children aged two – three years, children in reception – school year six and healthcare workers.

In 2020/21 we expect to offer more than 30 million vaccines.

■ Insulin and Medical Equipment

Daisy Cooper:

[89861]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to ensure the uninterrupted provision of (a) Epi-pens and (b) insulin in the event that the UK and EU do not reach a trade agreement by the end of the transition period.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: Our priority is to ensure that patients continue to have access to medicines and medical products they need. The Department, in consultation with the devolved administrations and Crown Dependencies, is working with trade bodies, product suppliers, and the health and care system in England to make detailed plans to help ensure continued supply of medicines and medical products, including Epi-pens and insulin, to the whole of the United Kingdom at the end of the transition period in all scenarios.

Further detail on the plans to help ensure continuity of medical supplies has been communicated to suppliers and can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-medicines-and-medical-products-suppliers-3-august-2020/letter-to-medicine-suppliers-3-august-2020>

■ Large Goods Vehicles: Coronavirus

Jane Hunt:

[87712]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the (a) potential merits and (b) feasibility of carrying out temperature checks on hauliers entering the UK.

Helen Whately:

Throughout the outbreak, all of our decisions have been informed by the best scientific evidence. Temperature screening was considered and discounted as a border measure on the basis that it is not, at present, effective or reliable in accurately identifying or rapidly screening for COVID-19. For example, temperature screening would not detect those who are asymptomatic, nor those who are symptomatic but do not have a fever.

International arrivals are required to supply their contact and accommodation information, and self-isolate in their accommodation for 14 days, unless they are exempt or travelling from a country on the travel corridors list. Lorry drivers do not need to self-isolate on entry into the United Kingdom as freight drivers are exempt from quarantine in order to keep vital supplies of goods moving.

■ Malnutrition: Coronavirus

Andrew Percy:

[81785]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the incidence of malnutrition in covid-19 patients in hospital settings.

Jo Churchill:

NHS Digital advises that within Hospital Episode Statistics data it is not possible to determine if a patient that was admitted with COVID-19 also went on to develop malnutrition.

Andrew Percy:

[\[81786\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the incidence of malnutrition in covid-19 patients outside hospital settings.

Jo Churchill:

NHS Digital does not hold any data on COVID-19 patients outside hospital settings.

■ **Maternal Mortality: Ethnic Groups**

Alex Sobel:

[\[90226\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps the Government is taking to end the increased risk of maternal death for Black women.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Work to reduce health inequalities around maternal mortality rates is being led by Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent OBE, Chief Midwifery Officer. This includes understanding why mortality rates are higher, considering evidence about what will reduce mortality rates and taking action.

The NHS Long Term Plan outlines plans to reduce health inequalities and address unwarranted variation in maternity care. Targeted and enhanced continuity of carer can significantly improve outcomes for women. The Long Term Plan sets out that 75% of black women will receive continuity of carer from midwives by 2024.

NHS England and NHS Improvement wrote to Local Maternity Systems on 22 June 2020 to ask them to take four specific actions to minimise COVID-19 risk for minority ethnic women and their babies: increase support for at-risk pregnant women; reach out and reassure pregnant black, Asian and minority ethnic women with tailored communications; minimise the risk of Vitamin D insufficiency; and ensure correct ethnicity and postcode data are collected.

■ **Maternity Services: Coronavirus**

Stella Creasy:

[\[91635\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, by what date he is planning for the full implementation by maternity services of the guidance on visitor restrictions issued on 8 September 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: On 5 June 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement revised their guidance on how National Health Service organisations may choose to facilitate visiting across healthcare inpatient settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The national suspension on visiting imposed under previous guidance was lifted with immediate effect.

Visiting is now subject to local discretion by trusts and other NHS bodies, and will take into account local prevalence. The number of visitors at the bedside is limited to one close family contact or somebody important to the patient. However, where it is possible to maintain social distancing throughout the visit, a second additional visitor can be permitted in certain circumstances including those individuals receiving end-of-life care.

The maternity visiting guidance has been published by NHS England and NHS Improvement. It has been designed to assist NHS trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in English maternity services. It applies to inpatient and outpatient settings.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/09/par001599-framework-for-the-reintroduction-of-visitors-throughout-maternity-services-sep-2020.pdf>

Stella Creasy:

[91637]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the proportion of visiting restrictions that can be lifted in maternity services without services becoming covid-19-insecure.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: Risk assessments on the safety of maternity services which would include an assessment of visiting restrictions as part of COVID-19 infection control, are conducted locally by trusts. NHS England and NHS Improvement therefore do not hold this data.

On 8 September, NHS England and NHS Improvement published a Framework to assist all National Health Service trusts to reintroduce access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women in maternity services in England, developed in partnership with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Royal College of Midwives and the Society and College of Radiographers.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/09/par001599-framework-for-the-reintroduction-of-visitors-throughout-maternity-services-sep-2020.pdf>

NHS England and NHS Improvement expect trusts to use this Framework and consider how access for partners, visitors and other supporters of pregnant women can be safely reintroduced to maternity services as a priority. The Framework recommends a stepwise approach for NHS trusts to take, following a meaningful and documented risk assessment, so any necessary changes can be made before relaxing current stringent approaches.

■ Medical Certificates: Fees and Charges

Navendu Mishra:

[89869]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will make an estimate of the number of disabled people who are financially affected by charges for doctors letters and statements.

Jo Churchill:

The Department does not hold data on the number of disabled people who are financially affected by charges for doctors' letters and statements.

The General Medical Services and Personal Medical Services Regulations contain a list of statutory certificates that general practitioner (GP) practices are required to provide without charge. Practices are free to charge for the completion of certificates, forms and letters that are not listed as being exempt. NHS England and NHS Improvement expect practices to charge a reasonable sum, appropriate for the workload involved.

The Government recognises that there are concerns about some fees GPs charge for letters to certify a patient's health. We are now undertaking a thorough review of levels of bureaucracy in general practice to streamline processes, free up valuable time to care for patients and to ensure consistency and fairness of charges for certification.

■ Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Independent Review

Emma Hardy:

[89818]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review entitled First Do No Harm, what his timescale is for implementing recommendations (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3, (d) 4 and (e) 6.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

All recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review are being considered carefully.

The Government will provide an update in due course.

■ Members: Telephone Services

Steve McCabe:

[88245]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Coronavirus Members' Hotline will reopen.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: Public Health England's (PHE's) COVID-19 Email Helpline for Parliamentarians continue to operate five days a week from 9.00am to 5.00pm.

Any Parliamentarian who requires a conversation with PHE officials can request it via the email helpline.

■ **Mental Health Services: Standards**

Kerry McCarthy:

[\[86573\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps his Department has taken to support quality improvement programmes aimed at reducing the use of restrictive practices in mental health settings.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

NHS England and NHS Improvement published the 'NHS Patient Safety Strategy, safer culture, safer systems, safer patients' in July 2019. Within this is the Mental Health Safety Improvement Programme which supports mental health trusts with their individual safety priorities as well as around challenges which are common across the local systems. This work includes quality improvement to reduce the use of restrictive practices.

Work continues through NHS England and NHS Improvement's Patient Safety Collaboratives to identify interventions which will have a measurable impact in reducing the use of restrictive practices.

■ **Mental Health Services: Worcestershire**

Sajid Javid:

[\[88856\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to support the provision of mental health services in Worcestershire for people aged 16-24.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

Continuing to expand access to children's mental health services nationally is a priority for this Government, and it is a core part of the NHS Long Term Plan. The National Health Service has set an ambitious goal of an extra 345,000 children and young people aged 0-25 receiving support via NHS-funded mental health services and schools-based mental health support teams by 2023/24.

As a system, Herefordshire and Worcestershire have strengthened their transitions work through a new model for adult community mental health, with longer transitions and increased provision for young adults. The aim of this work is to reduce the 'cliff edge' experienced by some people when they turn 18.

■ **Mental Health: Community Development**

Tom Hunt:

[\[88408\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of supporting grassroots initiatives to improve mental health in local communities.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is supportive of grassroots initiatives to improve the mental health of local communities.

The Department is providing £5.23 million in grant funding to Mind to administer the Coronavirus Mental Health Response Fund, which is helping local and national voluntary and community sector organisations support people who are experiencing mental ill-health.

As part of this work, the National Survivor User Network is administering a smaller fund to support community and user-led groups and organisations which might not otherwise be eligible for a grant. Grants of up to £2,000 were made available to support community action, peer support, mutual aid and other activities.

We are also providing £12.5 million of funding between 2016/17–2020/21 to the Time to Change mental health anti-stigma campaign which empowers people with lived experience of mental health to work with schools and employers to implement local grassroots mental health anti-stigma campaigns.

■ Musicians: Coronavirus**Dame Cheryl Gillan:****[89584]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if (a) amateur and (b) professional (i) choirs, (ii) orchestras and (iii) music groups that can demonstrate they are covid-secure are exempt from the covid-19 restrictions on the number of people allowed to meet in a group from 14 September 2020.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: Amateur choirs, orchestras or drama groups should not rehearse or perform together in groups of more than six. They could split into sub-groups to do so, provided these groups do not interact.

Further guidance is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>

Hilary Benn:**[90044]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether (a) music ensembles and (b) orchestras can meet in groups of more than six people following the Government's announcement on 9 September 2020 of new covid-19 restrictions; and if he will publish guidance on that matter.

Sir Graham Brady:**[90049]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will add the activities of non-profit music organisations to the list of exemptions to the rule of six restriction on socialising.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The latest evidence indicates that the COVID-19 infection rate is beginning to rise across the country. It is therefore now vitally important that the Government takes decisive action to limit any further spread and reduce the likelihood of a further national lockdown of the type that was necessary earlier this year. These measures were announced last week with clear guidance on what would change.

The rule of six does not apply to gatherings necessary for work. Non-professional performing arts activity, including choirs, orchestras or drama groups can legally continue to rehearse or perform together where this is planned activity in line with the performing arts guidance and if they can do so in a way that ensures that there is no interaction between groups of more than six at any time.

If an amateur group is not able to ensure that no mingling takes place between these sub-groups of no more than six (including when arriving at or leaving activity or in any breaks or socialising) then such non-professional activity should not take place.

■ **NHS: Negligence****Jeremy Hunt:**[\[88854\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the NHS spent on medication errors in each year from 2005 to 2019 inclusive.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 September 2020]: NHS Resolution handles clinical negligence claims on behalf of National Health Service organisations and independent sector providers of NHS care in England.

NHS Resolution has provided the following information:

The following table shows the total value of payments made by NHS Resolution in respect of medication errors in financial years 2005/06 to 2019/20 on behalf of NHS organisations in England.

FINANCIAL YEAR	COSTS (£)
2005/06	6,343,218
2006/07	10,842,247
2007/08	6,697,492
2008/09	8,236,777
2009/10	11,331,735
2010/11	13,592,393
2011/12	14,034,990

FINANCIAL YEAR	COSTS (£)
2012/13	12,497,449
2013/14	12,781,351
2014/15	14,450,193
2015/16	13,113,869
2016/17	21,379,362
2017/18	25,847,450
2018/19	22,915,002
2019/20	24,299,533

Nicola Richards:

[\[91195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of section 2(4) of the Law Reform (Personal Injuries) Act 1948 on the annual cost of clinical negligence claims against NHS England.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The costs of clinical negligence have been rising over several years at an unsustainable rate, eating into resources available for frontline care. This is despite our substantial safety programmes.

The Department is working with the Ministry of Justice, other Government departments and NHS Resolution, looking at a wide range of options to address the drivers of cost of clinical negligence claims, which includes the effect of section 2(4) of the Law Reform (Personal Injuries) Act 1948. This is a complex issue and the work is ongoing. We will update the House in due course.

Nicola Richards:

[\[91196\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect on the level of clinical negligence claims against the NHS of incidents that have occurred during its response to the covid-19 outbreak; and what plans he has to support frontline NHS staff in relation to the emotional consequences of prolonged litigation.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

We are committed to ensuring National Health Service staff have the support and resources they need to respond to the pandemic. We established the Clinical Negligence Scheme for COVID-19 to handle pandemic claims not falling under existing indemnity schemes and we communicated these plans in a letter of 2 April to NHS staff and providers. We have also taken steps, working with the NHS, professional regulators and across Government to ensure that claims, complaints and

court processes can appropriately take into account the unprecedented context NHS staff are working within in response to COVID-19.

Clinical negligence claims tend to lag incidents substantially and it will be some months or even years before we can begin to assess the impact of COVID-19 on clinical negligence claims. We and NHS Resolution, the body responsible for handling clinical negligence claims on behalf of NHS organisations and independent sector providers of NHS care in England, will continue to monitor this.

NHS employers, like other employers, have a moral and statutory duty to support their staff. Every employer in the NHS makes available occupational health and wellbeing support for their staff.

■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures

Sarah Champion:

[\[90133\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase public awareness of (a) the risks associated with non-surgical cosmetic treatments and (b) where to make a complaint in relation to unsafe practices.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is committed to improving the safety of cosmetic procedures through better training for practitioners, and clear information so that people can make informed decisions about their care.

During May and June 2019, the Department ran a communications campaign to increase public awareness of the potential risks of cosmetic procedures and encourage people to make safe decisions about their care. The campaign materials were developed in conjunction with stakeholders including professional associations, the healthcare regulatory bodies and psychologists. The campaign offered guidance on choosing a qualified practitioner and how to escalate patient safety concerns. Advice and information about cosmetic procedures has also been reviewed and updated on NHS.UK.

■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Regulation

Sarah Champion:

[\[90134\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the regulation of (a) mobile and (b) home-based practitioners providing non-surgical cosmetic treatments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is committed to improving the safety of cosmetic procedures and the Department is exploring the regulation of premises, practitioners, products and consumer safeguards. The Government expects providers of cosmetic procedures to operate responsibly and hold the requisite knowledge and skills to safely deliver the treatments they offer. Where applicable, practitioners should also consider any guidance issued by the healthcare regulators or a relevant professional body.

■ Non-surgical Cosmetic Procedures: Training

Paula Barker:

[\[90287\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that all practitioners providing (a) specialised cosmetic treatments) and (b) other non-surgical cosmetic treatments are suitably trained in relation to infection (i) prevention and (ii) control.

Paula Barker:

[\[90288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if his Department will make an assessment of the (a) adequacy and (b) effectiveness of the current regulation of non-surgical cosmetic treatments; and whether he plans to introduce a minimum age limit for these treatments.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Government is committed to improving the safety of cosmetic procedures and the Department is exploring the regulation of premises, practitioners, products and consumer safeguards. This includes an assessment of the regulation and qualifications of practitioners in the aesthetics sector.

The Government expects providers to have the requisite knowledge and skills to safely deliver the treatments they offer. Providers of aesthetic services should ensure they have taken the necessary steps to become COVID-19 secure in line with Health and Safety legislation and the Government's published guidance on close contact services.

The Government supports the principle of increased protection for children and young people and is exploring the legal implications and potential impacts of introducing age restrictions for some non-surgical procedures.

■ Obesity: Health Services

Sarah Champion:

[\[89710\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government plans to publish details of the expansion of weight management services as part of the obesity strategy; and whether that expansion will include specific support for people affected by binge eating disorder.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: Through the new obesity strategy, we are delivering a range of measures on weight management including a National Health Service 12-week weight loss plan app, expanding weight management services to help more people get the support they need, accelerating the expansion of the NHS diabetes prevention programme and making conversations about weight in primary care the norm. Further details about these measures will be available later in the year and we will engage stakeholders throughout this process.

■ Ophthalmic Services: Transport

Alex Norris: [\[83915\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and social Care, pursuant to the answer of 1 September 2020 to Question 78839, what his timetable is for the resumption of patient transport services for patients with ophthalmology appointments.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: On 27 March the National Health Service released guidance to reflect changes in patient transport services during the COVID-19 response. As the NHS returns to a business as usual position further amendments to the guidance have been made and are due to be published shortly. NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups will implement this guidance locally to provide appropriate levels of service going forward.

■ Paracetamol

Emily Thornberry: [\[90068\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of paracetamol that were available for prescription or purchase in the UK prior to 31 October 2019.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90069\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of paracetamol that are available for prescription or purchase in the UK as of 15 September 2020.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government last made an assessment of stockpiling of paracetamol that may be needed in preparation for (a) a second wave of the covid-19 pandemic; and (b) the end of the transition period; and if he will publish that assessment.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90071\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of ibuprofen that were available for prescription or purchase in the UK prior to 31 October 2019.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90072\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of ibuprofen that are available for prescription or purchase in the UK as of 15 September 2020.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90073\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government last made an assessment of the level of stockpiling of ibuprofen required in preparation for (a)

a second wave of covid-19 and (b) the end of the transition period and if he will publish that assessment.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90074\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of inhalers that were available for prescription or purchase in the UK prior to 31 October 2019.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90075\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of inhalers that are available for prescription or purchase in the UK as of 15 September 2020.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90076\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care when the Government last made an assessment of the level of stockpiling of inhalers required in preparation for (a) a second wave of covid-19 and (b) the end of the transition period and if he will publish that assessment.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90077\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of amoxicillin that were available for prescription or purchase in the UK prior to 31 October 2019.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90078\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of amoxicillin that are available for prescription or purchase in the UK as of 15 September 2020.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90079\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government last made an assessment of any stockpiling of amoxicillin that will need to be undertaken in preparation for (a) a second wave of the covid-19 pandemic, and (b) the end of the transition period; and if he will publish that assessment.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he can provide of the size of the stockpiles of insulin including all types and analogues of insulin and combinations including insulin mentioned in the Government's list of medicines that cannot be exported from the UK or hoarded that were available for prescription or purchase in the UK prior to 31 October 2019.

Emily Thornberry: [\[90081\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what estimate he has made of the size of the stockpiles of insulin including all types and analogues of insulin and combinations including insulin mentioned in the government's 'list of medicines that

cannot be exported from the UK or hoarded') that are available for prescription or purchase in the UK as of 15 September 2020.

Emily Thornberry:

[90083]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when the Government last made an assessment of stockpiling of insulin including all types and analogues of insulin and combinations including insulin mentioned in the Government's list of medicines that cannot be exported from the UK or hoarded, that will need to be undertaken in preparation for (a) a second wave of the covid-19 pandemic; and (b) the end of the transition period, and if he will publish that assessment.

Jo Churchill:

Our priority is to ensure that patients continue to have access to medicines and medical products they need. We are working closely with industry, the National Health Service and others in the supply chain to ensure that precautions are in place to reduce the likelihood of future shortages

The Government continues to hold stockpiles of medicines, including many of those medicines raised in the Rt. hon. Member's questions, to cope with a range of scenarios, and robust contingency planning continues to ensure that the country is prepared for a possible second peak of COVID-19 infections and the end of the Transition period.

The Essential Medicines Buffer Stock (EMBS) supports the NHS in the event of a pandemic or other health emergency by ensuring the continued availability of medicines that are in routine use within the NHS in the event that the supply chain is interrupted. Volumes of the medicines listed in the EBMS for the requested dates are shown in the following table. The original EMBS contracts ended in October 2019 and the current ones expire on 31 March 2021.

VOLUMES IN EMBS

(PACKS/SINGLES)	PRIOR TO 31 OCTOBER 2019	ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2020
paracetamol_500mg_Caps/Tabs 100 pack	706,072	2,965,503
paracetamol_500mg_Caps/Tabs 100 pack	4,942,506	
paracetamol_500mg-Caps/Tabs 100 pack	706,072	
paracetamol_125mg suppository 10 pack	3,578	
paracetamol_120mg/5ml liquid 100ml single	340,062	
paracetamol_250mg/5ml_liquid	201,159	

VOLUMES IN EMBS

(PACKS/SINGLES)	PRIOR TO 31 OCTOBER 2019	ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2020
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100ml single		
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paracetamol_500mg_Caps/Tabs	706,072	
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100 pack		
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salbutamol_2mg/ml	246,246	
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2.5ml_nebules 20 pack		
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Salbutamol_100mcg x 200	3,956,254	
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dose_MDI single inhalers		2,600,000
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ibuprofen_100mg/5ml_liquid	230,400	
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100ml-150ml-500ml (volume in 100ml) singles		
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ibuprofen_400mg_Caps/Tabs	591,883	
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84 pack		
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amoxicillin_125mg/5ml_liquid	234,925	
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100ml singles		
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amoxicillin_125mg/5ml_liquid	234,925	
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100ml singles		
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amoxicillin_250mg_Caps/Tabs	235,874	
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21 pack		
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amoxicillin_500mg_Caps/Tabs	1,714,429	
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21 pack		
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amoxicillin_125mg/5ml_liquid	313,234	
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100ml singles		
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Amoxicillin_250mg_Caps/Tabs	157,249	
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21 pack		
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Amoxicillin_500mg_Caps/Tabs	489,837	
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21 pack		
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In preparation for a potential imminent second wave of COVID-19 and to protect the security of the supply of critical life-saving medicines and patient health across the United Kingdom, a clinically-led assessment of medicines that should be stockpiled was undertaken in May and June 2020 and this was fed into a tender exercise that ran from 24 July to 10 August 2020.

Paracetamol and insulin are amongst the medicines that were identified and tendered for as part of this exercise and we will shortly be awarding contracts to secure supplies of these medicines for the autumn and winter. Details of the tender exercise can be found at the following links:

<https://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:355937-2020:HTML:EN:HTML&tabId=1&tabLang=en#id4-VI>

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/b8bf439c-76d1-4fa6-952d-6b65bd659021>

With regard to stocks of medicines on UK soil owned and held by suppliers themselves, commercially sensitive information has been shared confidentially with the Department by suppliers of medicines to the UK, to support various contingency programmes. For this reason, we cannot share information received from suppliers, including on their UK stock levels, with third parties.

■ Pharmacy: Disclosure of Information

Helen Hayes:

[82191]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has he made of the efficacy of National Pharmacy Association advice to pharmacists responding to customer complaints that no admission of error should be made to customers; and whether that advice represents a contravention of Statutory Duty of Candour.

Jo Churchill:

Pharmacy regulators have set out in professional standards, that registered pharmacy professionals have a “duty of candour”, which includes an obligation to be open and honest when things go wrong and report and raise concerns. This is in line with other healthcare professionals.

The pharmacy regulator for Great Britain, the General Pharmaceutical Council’s (GPhC) inspection model, is designed to encourage the reporting and learning from errors. In fitness to practise hearings and sanctions guidance, the GPhC makes reference to the duty of candour, and that fitness to practice committees should take very seriously a finding that a pharmacy professional took deliberate steps to avoid being candid with a patient.

■ Pharmacy: Protective Clothing

Janet Daby:

[82362]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that pharmacies have a sufficient supply of personal protective equipment.

Jo Churchill:

The Department is working to provide community pharmacies with personal protective equipment (PPE). In March we delivered PPE to around 11,500 pharmacies in England, with a further supply in July delivered to pharmacies in Leicester, which were affected by the local lockdown. Further supplies of PPE can be

ordered through the wholesalers and distributor networks that supply to community pharmacies. Those pharmacies who are critically short of PPE, should phone the National Supply Distribution Response on 0800 915 9964 for an urgent delivery.

From 3 August, all community pharmacies were invited to register with the PPE portal, where they can order up to a set amount of PPE per week. Pharmacies are encouraged to register promptly for the PPE portal, to ensure they can order emergency PPE from a central inventory. Pharmacies can contact the Department's customer services team on 0800 876 6802 if they have any queries or are struggling to register with the portal. Information on what items are available for this sector and size are available on the Department's Guidance at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ppe-portal-how-to-order-emergency-personal-protective-equipment>

■ **Pregnancy: Sodium Valproate**

Emma Hardy: [89820]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of babies harmed by valproate in pregnancy following the failure of the pregnancy prevention program for women prescribed sodium valproate.

Emma Hardy: [89821]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information is provided by his Department to midwives in order to help them prepare an expectant mother with epilepsy in the ante-natal stages of her pregnancy, when prescribed sodium valproate.

Emma Hardy: [89822]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will take steps to (a) investigate the lack of information given to pregnant women prescribed with sodium valproate and (b) introduce a national compensation fund for people affected by the effects of sodium valproate being prescribed to pregnant women.

Emma Hardy: [89823]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will ask the Office for National Statistics to provide the figures for the years from 2013 to 2020 of the number of recorded births of babies diagnosed with fetal valproate spectrum disorder.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is working with stakeholders to restrict the use of valproate in women of childbearing potential to those for whom other medicines are ineffective or not tolerated; to provide information to support switching of women to other antiepileptics and to improve compliance with the valproate Pregnancy Prevention Programme which aims to rapidly reduce and eventually eliminate pregnancies exposed to valproate.

It is the responsibility of every healthcare professional involved in the prescribing and dispensing of valproate to make sure women are aware of the serious risks in

pregnancy and are enrolled in the statutory Pregnancy Prevention Programme. United Kingdom Chief Medical Officers wrote to all healthcare professionals in April 2018 to inform them of the actions required and in September 2018 UK Chief Pharmaceutical Officers contacted all pharmacists to remind them of their responsibilities when dispensing valproate. This has been reinforced by messages from the professional regulators to their members and by articles in the MHRA's electronic bulletin Drug Safety Update in September and again in December 2018 calling all healthcare professionals to examine whether they are prescribing in compliance with the measures.

No data are available on the number of children harmed by valproate or the number of diagnoses with Fetal Valproate Spectrum Disorder from 2013 to 2020.

Regarding the National Compensation Fund, all recommendations of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review are being considered carefully. The Government will respond in due course.

■ **Radox Testing Services: Coronavirus**

Justin Madders:

[\[83848\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether independent laboratory validation of the Radox tests for covid-19 were undertaken by the Government.

Helen Whately:

Radox laboratory has completed the required standardised process as part of the National Laboratory Validation and Assurance for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) testing.

Test and Trace laboratories must perform a validation exercise which complies with International Organization for Standardization accreditation standards. Validation can be extensive and provides documentary evidence that any assay is suitable for its intended purpose. This may involve experiments to determine its performance characteristics, such as accuracy, sensitivity, limits of detection, reliability and reproducibility.

Any process changes within the end to end testing pathway must be revalidated to demonstrate performance.

■ **School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme**

Fleur Anderson:

[\[89864\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, when he plans to restart the school fruit and vegetable scheme; and whether he plans to extend that scheme to all primary school pupils.

Jo Churchill:

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme resumed in September when children returned to school. As before, all children in Key Stage 1 in state-funded primary schools will receive a free piece of fruit or vegetable every school day.

There are currently no plans to extend this scheme to all primary school pupils.

■ Sepsis: Health Education

Colleen Fletcher:

[\[91070\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to improve public awareness and understanding of sepsis.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: The Government continues to raise public awareness and understanding of sepsis through initiatives like Public Health England (PHE)'s national Start4life Information Service for Parents, targeting parents of zero to five-year olds. This includes leaflets, posters and a content-rich social media toolkit for partners to use on their own channels raising awareness at community level. PHE has also worked in partnership with Mumsnet, a leading digital platform for parents, to raise awareness through editorial and social media promotion.

The Department takes advice from NHS England and NHS Improvement's Acute Deterioration Board, which brings together frontline experts from across the healthcare system, and seeks to ensure that sepsis campaigns target appropriate audiences and deliver measurable outcomes.

■ Sexually Transmitted Infections

Catherine West:

[\[84719\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what additional steps his Department is taking to tackle sexually transmitted diseases.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 8 September 2020]: Local authorities in England are mandated to provide comprehensive open access sexual health services including access to the full range of contraception and sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment. The Government provides funding to local authorities for their public health responsibilities, including sexual health services, through the public health grant. It is for individual local authorities to decide their spending priorities based on an assessment of local need, including the need for sexual health services taking account of their statutory duties. The number of consultations at sexual health services increased by 7% between 2018 and 2019 (from 3,613,447 to 3,852,121).

Work on the development of a new national sexual and reproductive health strategy is underway with the Department working with Public Health England, NHS England and NHS Improvement, local government and other partners. Details of the strategy's scope and objectives will be announced in due course.

■ Sitel: Coronavirus

Helen Hayes:

[\[85080\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which companies have been subcontracted by Sitel to deliver contact tracing services; what the (a) value and (b)

staffing levels is of each of those contracts; and how many people have been referred under each of those contracts to date.

Helen Whately:

[Holding answer 9 September 2020]: Sitel do not use subcontractors on the contact tracing contract.

■ Smoking

Mary Kelly Foy:

[83956]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the July 2019 Green Paper entitled Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s, when he plans to publish further proposals on moving towards a smokefree country by 2030.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 7 September 2020]: Smoking rates are at their lowest ever levels in England at 13.9%. However, we are not complacent, and the Government is committed to protecting the population from the harms of tobacco. We intend to publish the Government response to the Prevention Green Paper, 'Advancing our health: prevention in the 2020s' in due course and key steps and ambitions to deliver smokefree 2030 after this.

Lee Anderson:

[88392]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to tackle the regional variation in smoking cessation rates.

Jo Churchill:

One of the main aims of the Government's Tobacco Control Plan for England is to reduce the regional and socio-economic variations in smoking rates, by achieving system-wide

change and targeting actions at the right groups.

Actions include promoting links to smoking cessation services across the whole health and care system and full implementation of relevant National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines by 2022.

'Smoke-free generation: tobacco control plan for England' can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/towards-a-smoke-free-generation-tobacco-control-plan-for-england>

Local authorities are responsible for commissioning a range of stop smoking support to meet the needs of their local population. Public Health England supports local authorities to do this by providing a range of data and guidance.

■ Smoking: Ashfield

Lee Anderson:

[88393]

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of recent trends in the smoking cessation rate in Ashfield.

Jo Churchill:

The smoking rate for adults in Ashfield has seen an overall decline, from 27.8% in 2011 to 19.8% in 2019. The following table shows the trends in smoking rates for adults in Ashfield, the East Midlands and England since 2011.

Smoking trends in Ashfield, East Midlands and England, 2011 - 2019

	PERIOD	ASHFIELD	EAST MIDLANDS	ENGLAND
Count	Value			
2011	26,090	27.8% 20.2% 19.8%		
2012	24,063	25.5% 19.7% 19.3%		
2013	18,077	18.9% 18.9% 18.4%		
2014	18,953	19.7% 18.2% 17.8%		
2015	16,955	17.4% 18.0% 16.9%		
2016	20,744	21.1% 16.1% 15.5%		
2017	15,680	15.7% 15.7% 14.9%		
2018	16,636	16.6% 15.8% 14.4%		
2019	19,893	19.8% 14.8% 13.9%		

Source: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/tobacco-control/data#page/4/gid/1938132885/pat/6/par/E12000004/ati/101/are/E07000170/iid/92443/age/168/sex/4/cid/4/page-options/cin-ci-4_ovw-do-1_car-do-0

While this is a decrease overall, rates have increased slightly in the past three years and the current rate is higher than the average for adults in England, 13.9%.

■ **Smoking: Public Houses**

Alex Sobel: [\[84340\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the effect of adults smoking in beer gardens in the presence of children aged under 16 on the health of those children.

Jo Churchill:

No assessment has been made to date.

■ **Social Distancing: Coronavirus**

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[88807\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the comparative risk to public health of (a) a wedding reception for a maximum of 30 people in compliance with rules on social distancing and (b) a birthday party with the same constraints ; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 September 2020]: We know how important some life cycle ceremonies are to some people – they are generally one-off events, whereas people have a birthday every year. Life cycle events can take place in groups of up to 30 people, but they must happen in COVID-19 secure venues or public outdoor spaces. Other celebrations, such as birthdays, must not involve groups of more than six. We need to limit the number of celebratory events taking place in order to curb transmission of the virus so it is important that we safeguard the events that are most important to people.

Sir Christopher Chope: [\[88808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what comparative assessment he has made of the risk to public health of a social gathering of six people (a) in the open air and (b) inside a building; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 16 September 2020]: From Monday 14 September, when meeting friends and family they do not live with (or have formed a support bubble with) people must not meet in a group of more than six, indoors or outdoors. The law is clear. If there is any risk that a group of more than six will mix (including young children) then this must not happen.

Guidance on GOV.UK encourages people to meet outdoors where practical: meeting people outdoors is safer than meeting people indoors because fresh air provides better ventilation.

Going into winter – when more people will be socialising indoors – it is essential to have clear and well-understood rules, in order to prevent the spread of the virus.

■ Social Prescribing: Finance

Feryal Clark:

[\[82578\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether the Government's press release of 16 August 2020 announcing £5 million of funding for social prescribing extends to people (a) under the age of 18 and (b) aged 18 to 25.

Jo Churchill:

The £5 million funding for social prescribing projects, announced on 16 August 2020, will go to the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP), launched on 23 October 2019. NASP is an independent organisation that will support local community partnerships, encourage innovation and improve the evidence base for social prescribing into the future for all groups, including the under 18 and 18 to 25 demographic groups. NASP is well placed to understand the needs of local populations and allocate funding for services to meet those needs from the overall resource allocations they receive.

■ Sodium Valproate: Prescriptions

Christian Wakeford:

[\[91198\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what information NHS England holds on prescribing rates of sodium valproate to women and girls of childbearing age in each clinical commissioning group; and if he will make it his policy to routinely publish that data.

Jo Churchill:

The information on prescribing of sodium valproate is not held in the format requested.

■ Suicide: Higher Education

Carla Lockhart:

[\[90295\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies on suicide prevention of the ONS's estimates of suicide among higher education students, published in January 2018; and if he will make a statement.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

As laid out in 'Fourth progress report of the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives', the Department asked Public Health England (PHE) to lead a project to analyse and publish data on student suicides in England. PHE worked with the Office for National Statistics to link higher education data to suicide mortality data, for the period 2000/01 to 2016/17. The report 'Estimating suicide among Higher Education students, England and Wales' was published in June 2018.

In January 2019, we published the first Cross-Government Suicide Prevention Workplan, setting out an ambitious programme across national and local government and the National Health Service. It includes a commitment to analyse the suicide

rates of people at university to explore any lessons to be learned and increase awareness of suicide risk and mental wellbeing in universities.

■ Surgery: Waiting Lists

Dan Carden: [\[91707\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of trends in waiting times for surgery during the covid-19 outbreak.

Dan Carden: [\[91708\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what progress he is making on ensuring that people whose surgery has been delayed as a result of the covid-19 outbreak receive the treatment they need.

Edward Argar:

[Holding answer 22 September 2020]: The size of the waiting list reduced by 9% between March and May as the National Health Service suspended non-COVID-19 services to help free up capacity to support the response to COVID-19. The NHS is now restoring non-COVID-19 services, including routine surgery and the waiting list has subsequently increased by 5% between June and July while the number of completed admitted pathways has increased 51% over the same period.

The return of non-COVID-19 health services to near-normal levels includes making full use of available capacity between now and winter, whilst also preparing for winter demand pressures. This is being done alongside continued vigilance in light of any further COVID-19 spikes locally and possibly nationally. Clinically urgent patients should continue to be treated first, with priority then given to the longest waiting patients. Trusts, working with general practitioner practices, have also been asked to ensure that every patient whose planned care has been disrupted by COVID-19 receives clear communication about how they will be looked after, and who to contact in the event that their clinical circumstances change.

■ Thalassaemia

Fleur Anderson: [\[90282\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department takes to measure patient experience for people with beta-thalassaemia.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: NHS England has looked to address health inequalities within the Haemoglobinopathy patient population, which includes beta-thalassaemia patients. In the latter part of 2019 NHS England concluded a review of Haemoglobinopathy services; resulting in the development of services which will provide the opportunity to capture patient experience at a local level. This includes the National Haemoglobinopathy Register which can capture some elements of patient experience as part of the patient's annual review. Furthermore, in October 2019 the national conversation on rare diseases survey was launched to identify the major challenges faced by those living and working with rare diseases. We received

almost 6,300 responses which, alongside lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, will be used to shape the post-2020 UK Rare Diseases Framework.

■ Vaccination: Licensing

Liz Saville Roberts:

[\[90195\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to ensure that any vaccine approved for product license is safe for use.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 21 September 2020]: All vaccines will undergo a thorough assessment of quality, safety and efficacy before being licenced. The preferred route to enable deployment of a new vaccine for COVID-19 is through the usual marketing authorisation (product licensing) process. If a suitable COVID-19 vaccine candidate, with strong supporting evidence of safety, quality and efficacy, becomes available, we will seek to license that vaccine through the usual route. Until the end of December 2020, European Union legislation requires biotechnological medicines (which would include candidate COVID-19 vaccines) to be authorised via the European Medicines Agency, and a marketing authorisation granted by them would automatically be valid in the United Kingdom. From January 2021, the UK's licensing authority the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency will have new powers to license all medicines, including vaccines. Following vaccine deployment, safety will be proactively and continuously monitored.

■ Veterans: Mental Health Services

Grahame Morris:

[\[88288\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will bring forward proposals to introduce an annual mental health assessment for veterans for three years following discharge.

Ms Nadine Dorries:

[Holding answer 15 September 2020]: Currently, the Government has no plans to introduce an annual mental health assessment for veterans three years after discharge.

In England, veterans are not only able to access mainstream National Health Service provided mental health services, they have access to several bespoke services NHS England and NHS Improvement have put in place. This includes the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service which offers an in-reach mental health service for those in transition, leading up to, and leaving the Armed Forces

This service is in addition to the Complex Treatment Service and the forthcoming Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service which will provide crisis care and therapeutic inpatient support for those who need urgent and emergency care.

■ Visual Impairment: Research

Marsha De Cordova: [\[89832\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on medical research on eye conditions.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[89833\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how much the Government and its agencies have spent on medical research on eye conditions in each financial year since 2010-11.

Marsha De Cordova: [\[89837\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent estimate he has made of the return on investment from medical research into eye conditions.

Edward Argar:

Early in the pandemic a decision was taken to pause many of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) funded and supported studies to enable the research workforce to focus on delivering the nationally prioritised COVID-19 studies or enabling redeployment to frontline care where necessary. We have now entered a new phase of the pandemic: the NIHR is working towards the restoration of research funded and/or supported by the NIHR – including research on eye conditions.

The NIHR has awarded £48.3 million through its Programmes for research regarding eye conditions and has supported a further £97.9 million of research through its infrastructure between 2010/11 and 2018/19. UK Research and Innovation has funded £54.1 million on research regarding eye conditions between 2015/16 and 2019/20. The Department has not made an assessment of return on investment specifically from medical research into eye conditions.

■ Vitamin D: Coronavirus

Mr David Jones: [\[89623\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of the implications for its policies of the conclusions of the study by the Reina Sofia University Hospital, Córdoba, on the use of 25-hydroxyvitamin D in the treatment of covid-19, published in the Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology on 29 August 2020.

Jo Churchill:

[Holding answer 17 September 2020]: The Department has noted the findings from this study. Public Health England (PHE) is monitoring any new, high quality evidence on nutrition and COVID-19 and is seeking further advice from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) as appropriate. On 29 June 2020, the SACN and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published a rapid evidence review which concluded that there is currently no evidence to support taking vitamin D supplements to reduce the risk or severity of COVID-19.

In April 2020, PHE re-issued advice on vitamin D supplementation, advising that people who do not go outdoors often should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D to prevent deficiency. Existing evidence also highlights that people who have dark skin – for example, have an African, African-Caribbean or south Asian background – may also not get enough vitamin D from sunlight. This advice is not about reducing the risk of COVID-19 or mitigating its effects; vitamin D is needed to keep bones and muscles healthy.

HOME OFFICE

■ **British Nationality: Zimbabwe**

Dan Jarvis:

[\[81907\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many and what proportion of Zimbabwean Government officials who have been granted British citizenship in each of the last five years are included in the Government's Designated Persons list.

Kevin Foster:

No individual persons are currently subject to an asset freeze under the Zimbabwe regime.

The Consolidated List of Financial Sanctions Asset Freeze Targets in the UK lists one entity under the Zimbabwe regime; Zimbabwe Defence Industries.

■ **Extradition: USA**

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90259\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 2020 to Question 69698, what estimate he has made of the number of extradition requests made by the USA to the UK during the period 1 January 2004 to 31 July 2020, and of those requests what was the (a) nationality of the defendant for each extradition request (b) number of successful extraditions by the nationality of the defendant and (c) number of rejected requests by the nationality of the defendant.

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90260\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Answer of 6 July 2020 to Question 69698 on Extradition: USA, for what reason the number of refused extradition requests from the US to the UK is different to the number of unsuccessful requests given in the Answer of 26 June 2020 to Question 4307.

James Brokenshire:

As a matter of long-standing policy and practice, we do not disclose whether an extradition request has been made or received until such time as a person is arrested in relation to the request. We therefore cannot provide the total number of extradition requests made by the USA to the UK or vice versa.

Statistics showing the nationality of the subject of requests which led to an extradition are available from January 2010 as nationality was not centrally recorded for all

cases before this time. Statistics showing the nationality of the subject of requests which were refused are available from 1 January 2004 and are set out below.

US EXTRADITION REQUESTS TO THE UK LEADING TO EXTRADITION (JAN 2010 – JULY 2020)

NATIONALITY	NUMBER
British *	51 (*includes 10 individuals with dual nationality)
US *	20 (*includes 5 individuals with dual nationality)
Somali	2
South African	1
Jamaican	3
Indian	1
Irish	2
Mexican	1
Egyptian	2
Saudi Arabian	1
Romanian	5
Pakistani	5
Chinese	1
Ghanaian*	2 (*includes 1 individual with dual nationality)
Colombian	2
Ukrainian	3
Iranian	1
Lithuanian	1
Italian	1
Latvian	1
Nigerian	3
Vietnamese	1

US EXTRADITION REQUESTS TO THE UK LEADING TO EXTRADITION (JAN 2010 – JULY 2020)

Dutch	1
German	1
Danish	1
Bangladeshi / Belizean (Dual national)	1

UK REFUSALS OF US EXTRADITION REQUESTS BY NATIONALITY SINCE 2004

NATIONALITY	NUMBER
British *	11
US *	6
Chinese	2
Iranian	1
Israeli	1
Total	21

* includes individuals who hold dual nationality

In relation to the difference in the numbers of unsuccessful requests, the Answers given to Questions 4307 and 69698 covered different time periods. All figures are taken from local management information and are not quality assured to the level of published National Statistics. As such they should always be treated as provisional and therefore subject to change as officials refresh and revise the available data. The figures do not include Scotland, which deals with its own extradition cases.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

■ Building Safety Fund

Mike Amesbury:

[91801]

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, how many applications his Department has received to the Building Safety Fund for the remediation of unsafe non-ACM cladding systems as of 10 September 2020; and how many building owners that figure represents.

Christopher Pincher:

We are currently reviewing registrations to the Building Safety Fund and verifying the registration data. We will publish registration statistics in September.

■ **Buildings: Insulation****Mike Amesbury:**[\[91802\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether his Department is collecting data on buildings with potentially dangerous cladding between 11 and 18 metres in height.

Christopher Pincher:

The Department is currently piloting a data collection exercise to understand the prevalence of different external wall system materials on 11-18 metres residential buildings.

■ **Housing: Construction****Bob Seely:**[\[91805\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will ensure that potential implementation of proposal 4 of the consultation Planning for the Future, updated on 6 August 2020, on a standard method of establishing housing requirement, will be subject to approval by the House.

Bob Seely:[\[91806\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, if he will ensure that temporary changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need proposed in the consultation Planning for the Future, updated on 6 August 2020, will be subject to approval by the House.

Christopher Pincher:

The proposals are out for consultation until 29 October 2020. Following consideration of the consultation responses received, the Government will publish a response in due course. The response will set out any decisions and any associated proposed implementation.

■ **Planning****Bob Seely:**[\[91804\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to implement reforms on the planning system outlined in the Planning for the Future consultation, updated on 6 August 2020.

Christopher Pincher:

The proposals are out for consultation until 29 October 2020. Following consideration of the consultation responses received, the Government will publish a response in due course. The response will set out any decisions and any associated proposed implementation.

■ Social Rented Housing: Construction

Thangam Debbonaire:

[\[91775\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, with reference to his Department's press release, Jenrick unveils huge £12 billion boost for affordable homes, September 2020, whether grant levels for social rent homes in areas that do not face a high affordability challenge may be higher than the level for affordable rent.

Christopher Pincher:

The Affordable Homes Programme is delivered through Homes England and the GLA in London. Each bid into the programme is evaluated on its own merits and based on the value for money of the scheme as a whole. The Government does not set grant rates for the programme, however we would expect grant rates to be lower in areas where it is cheaper to build and which face lower affordability challenges.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

■ Blood: Exports

Daisy Cooper:

[\[91808\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for International Trade, what assessment she has made of the UK's ability to export plasma products after the transition period ends on 31 December.

Graham Stuart:

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is working to open markets for UK exporters all over the world and do whatever it takes to ensure they have what they need to succeed. This includes replicating EU trade agreements to provide continuity, as well as negotiating additional arrangements to unlock new opportunities for UK businesses.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) will continue to be the competent authority for regulating the import and export of blood-based products. The same standards will be applied, and regulations will be in place to ensure that the safety and quality requirements for the import and export of blood-based products will continue to be met.

JUSTICE

■ Courts: York

Rachael Maskell:

[\[90181\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases are in the backlog of the York Criminal Court; and what assessment he has made of trends in the level of the case backlog at that court since 2015.

Chris Philp:

Outstanding cases in York have been on a downward trend since 2015 until 2019. The downward trend during this period reflects a reduction in receipts along with additional sitting days for York work which have been sat in Leeds.

York Crown Court is a listed building that houses two Crown Courtrooms. York Crown Court was a suspended court site due to Covid-19 from 27 March and reopened on 22 June, however during this time remote hearings did continue to take place.

Despite the restrictions resulting from it being a listed building, since reopening, York has recommenced much of its business, including face to face hearings, pre-trial preparation hearings and sentencing, and on the 20 July jury trials were recommenced in one of the courtrooms. Adaptations are being put in place to allow the second courtroom to be used for jury trials.

The volume of outstanding cases at the Crown Court in England and Wales is published by case type as part of the National Statistics bulletin [Criminal Court Statistics Quarterly](#), see Table C1. The latest published data is available to March 2020 and the next release to June 2020 is planned for release on the 24 September 2020.

Attachments:

1. Table [Worksheet PQ 90181 Rachael Maskell MP.xlsx]

■ Dangerous Driving: Sentencing**Colleen Fletcher:****[90145]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, when he plans to introduce legislative proposals to extend the maximum sentence for causing death by dangerous driving.

Chris Philp:

As set out in the government's White Paper, *A Smarter Approach to Sentencing*, we will be increasing the maximum penalties for causing death by dangerous driving and causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs to life imprisonment. We will also create a new offence of causing serious injury by careless driving. We will introduce legislation on these changes in the near future.

■ Family Courts: York**Rachael Maskell:****[90183]**

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases are in the backlog of the York Family Court; and what assessment he has made of trends in the level of the case backlog at that court since 2015.

Chris Philp:

The York family workload since 2015 has been on an upward trend and this is monitored regularly by the Local Family Justice Board. The increase is predominantly in Private Law applications, and this is a trend that is in line with the rest of the country. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March this year, York almost immediately moved to remote hearings to continue to deal with family work.

Whilst a decline was initially seen in the receipt of applications around this time, this has since reverted to normal levels. The York County Court building is restrictive in terms of social distancing, however face to face hearings have recommenced and a Nightingale Court has been set up to provide additional accommodation to hear family cases, and in particular Public Law cases.

The data in the attachment is derived from the Family Courts Case Management system. It includes private and public law outstanding cases, evaluated by case rather than by child.

Data provided are part of management information and are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics.

The data provided are the most recent available and for that reason might differ slightly from any previously published information. They have not been cross-referenced with case files.

Attachments:

1. Table [Table 90183.xlsx]

■ **Magistrates' Courts: York**

Rachael Maskell:

[\[90182\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many cases are in the backlog of the York Magistrate Court; and what assessment he has made of trends in the level of the case backlog at that court since 2015.

Chris Philp:

York is part of the North Yorkshire Local Justice Area, geographically the largest LJA in the country, though with a relatively low caseload for its size. It was created in January 2016, following the merger of a number of smaller LJAs. Subsequent changes to distribution of the LJA's workload between court houses in the area will have affected the outstanding cases at York. This will, in part, account for some of the variance in outstanding caseload.

York Magistrates' Court is a listed building with serious accessibility issues and challenges in maintaining social distancing. It was a suspended site between 30 March 2020 and 20 June and Priority 1 and 2 cases from York were listed at Leeds Magistrates' Court, with extensive use made of video-linking for the attendance of parties.

Before COVID-19, two courtrooms sat daily at York, and an additional room sat on 4 days per week. Due to the constraints of the building it has been challenging to open courtrooms whilst maintaining social distancing. Currently two courtrooms sit daily (including one video-enabled courtroom); from 5th October a third courtroom will be added, once social distancing mitigation measures have been put in place. This will take York's weekly planned sittings above their pre-COVID-19 levels. Current plans are for all CPS cases (other than those requiring a trial) displaced by the COVID sitting reductions to have had a hearing by mid-October.

The data provided is the most recent available and for that reason might differ slightly from any previously published information.

This counts all cases where there are one or more offences that have not been completed by the date, for the given date, where the case receipt is after October 2007. The report for outstanding cases is a snapshot based on what is showing as outstanding at the close of business on the last calendar day of the month.

Outstanding cases is not a calculation but is based on Receipts and Disposals and will be impacted on when cases are validated. Transferred cases may count for a period of time while they show in both sending and receiving courts; offences subsequently entered in error may change the categorisation of the case.

Data are management information and are not subject to the same level of checks as official statistics.

Data has not been cross referenced with case files.

Attachments:

1. Table [Worksheet PQ 90182 Rachael Maskell MP.xlsx]

■ Prisons

Bell Ribeiro-Addy:

[90273]

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what comparative assessment he has made of levels of (a) violence and (b) staffing in (i) public and (ii) private prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

The Ministry of Justice does not hold data that makes a comparative assessment of staffing and assaults in public and privately managed prisons.

We publish details on staffing in public prisons every quarter in our HMPPS Workforce Statistics, the latest version is to June 2020 and is available at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-june-2020>. We do not hold data on staffing levels in private prisons.

There were 32,800 assaults in prisons in England and Wales in 2019, of which 26,960 were in public prisons (82% of total assaults) and 5,840 were in private prisons (18% of total assaults).

Violence in prisons remains unacceptably high, which is why we are spending £100 million to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence and crime behind bars. This will fund tough airport-style security, body scanners and phone-blocking technology.

We are giving officers tools like PAVA pepper spray and body-worn cameras to make their jobs safer.

Our Assaults on Emergency Workers Act increased the maximum penalty for those who attack them to 12 months and we recently announced we will double the penalty further to two years.

HMP Birmingham changed from a private prison to a public prison in July 2019. Therefore, the figures for Birmingham have not been split between the public prisons total and the private prisons total, all assaults in Birmingham for 2019 were recorded as being in private prisons.

■ Prisons: Coronavirus

Sarah Atherton:

[\[906362\]](#)

What assessment he has made of the adequacy of the response to the covid-19 outbreak in prisons.

Lucy Frazer:

From the start of the pandemic our priority in prisons has been on protecting staff, prisoners, the NHS and the wider community from outbreaks in custody. Thanks to the hard work of prison staff we have so far been successful in achieving this, although we are not complacent and know challenges remain over the autumn and winter.

In March Public Health England (PHE) modelled an expected 2,300 deaths in prisons. We took decisive action to avoid thousands of prisoners and staff becoming infected with the virus. These included minimising movement between prisons and introducing measures to shield the vulnerable, isolate those with symptoms, and quarantine new entrants to custody.

As a result further modelling by PHE showed that our measures were being effective in controlling the spread of the virus, and avoiding widespread local outbreaks. There have to date been 23 prisoner deaths from Covid-19, and in recent months we have begun to ease restrictions in prison establishments. All our actions have been informed by the advice of experts from PHE and will be kept under constant review.

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ Northern Ireland Executive

Carla Lockhart:

[\[90296\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the Answer of 7 September to Question 78925, on what date he last met with each of the Northern Ireland Executive Ministers; and what the outcome of each of those meetings was.

Mr Robin Walker:

The Secretary of State and I regularly engage with and meet all Northern Ireland Executive ministers on a wide-range of issues.

Meetings between Executive and UK Government Ministers are not published, however recent meetings have focused on Northern Ireland's response to Covid-19, economic recovery and planning for the forthcoming Centenary of Northern Ireland.

TRANSPORT■ **Bus Services: Coronavirus**

Selaine Saxby: [90299]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on ensuring the financial viability of the UK bus and coach industries during the covid-19 outbreak.

Rachel Maclean:

Ministers and officials from the Department for Transport continue to engage with the Treasury and other government departments on assessing the impact of COVID-19 on the bus and coach industries.

■ **Crossrail Line**

Sir David Evennett: [90052]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent discussions he has with (a) the Mayor of London and (b) Transport for London on the timescale for Crossrail becoming fully operational.

Rachel Maclean:

The Secretary of State has regular discussions with the Mayor of London, covering a variety of subjects, including progress in delivering Crossrail.

■ **Department for Transport: Apprentices**

Robert Halfon: [91623]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress his Department is making on meeting the 2.3 per cent public sector apprenticeship target; and when his Department will meet that target.

Chris Heaton-Harris:

As of 31 March 2020, the Civil Service has achieved a total of 2.1% of its total workforce as apprentices against the legislative target for the public sector of 2.3% by March 2021. Department for Transport (DfT) has currently achieved 1.3% of the total staff employed within the department for 2020/21. Given this target is a percentage of the total workforce, the percentage changes in line with workforce fluctuations over time therefore making it challenging to predict when a department will meet it. The data for 2018/19 can be found [here](#). The data for 2019/20 will be released on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) by the end of September 2020. Due to the diverse nature of our work, the central department (DfTc) and our executive agencies (DfT Group) have developed localised strategies to allow us to continue towards the Government target. In September 2020 DfTc additionally transitioned to a cohort-based model of recruitment for apprenticeships; further strengthening our ambition for apprenticeship recruitment, and providing economies of scale to improve quality of provision and overall employee experience for the apprenticeship community.

Departments are committed to increasing the number of apprentices across the Civil Service and continue to work towards the 2.3% target. The impact of the current pandemic has slowed recruitment due to priority work and logistics. With the current strategy and targets coming to an end in April 2021, the Civil Service is already focusing on how to continue to support the apprenticeship agenda and drive forward apprenticeship recruitment, pulling on the Plan for Jobs initiative and considering the current economic situation.

■ **Shipping: Pay**

Virginia Crosbie:

[91813]

To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 pandemic on rates of pay for (a) seafarers and (b) maritime workers.

Robert Courts:

The Department is working with unions and industry to understand what steps can be taken to further protect jobs and livelihoods in the sector. However, no recent in-depth assessment has been made on the impact of Covid-19 on rates of pay for seafarers or maritime workers.

TREASURY

■ **Credit Rating: Coronavirus**

Ian Mearns:

[91836]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the Answer of 25 March 2020 to Question 31557, what steps his Department has taken to protect consumers' credit ratings being affected by the financial effects of the covid-19 outbreak.

John Glen:

Earlier this year, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) published guidance on what it expects mortgage and consumer credit lenders to do for customers facing temporary cashflow disruptions as a result of COVID-19. The guidance states that firms should exercise forbearance by offering the customer a payment deferral period (payment holiday) meaning the customer makes either no, or small, token payments during that period.

The guidance sets out that there should be no worsening of arrears status on a consumer's credit file from taking out a payment holiday. This was reconfirmed in the FCA's updated guidance and continues to be the case for any borrower taking out a payment holiday until 31 October.

It is important that lenders act responsibly when deciding whether or not to accept a credit application, to ensure that consumers are not lent to in an unaffordable way. Therefore, outside of payment holidays, the FCA expects firms to reflect repayments and arrears on the consumer's credit file in the usual manner.

■ Eat Out to Help Out Scheme

Sir David Evennett:

[90054]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, how many discounts were claimed as part of the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme in (a) Bexleyheath and Crayford constituency, (b) Bexley Borough, (c) London and (d) the UK.

Jesse Norman:

HMRC published statistics on the number of Eat Out to Help Out claims by Parliamentary constituency up to 27 August 2020:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eat-out-to-help-out-scheme-claims-by-parliamentary-constituency>.

HMRC also plan to add final data at Parliamentary constituency and local authority level once the claims service has closed, including data for Bexley Borough.

■ Employment: Coronavirus

Alex Sobel:

[90228]

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what support he plans to provide to people shielding with blood cancer who are unable to work from home and whose workplaces cannot be made covid-safe as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme closes.

Jesse Norman:

The Government understands that COVID-19 has posed significant challenges for those suffering with cancer. Those living with cancer have access to the unprecedented level of support for people's incomes that the Government has introduced in response to COVID-19. This includes the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), but also the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS), and changes to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

The Government has relaxed national advice to those who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), bringing it in line with the advice to those who are clinically vulnerable. If employers cannot provide a safe working environment, the CEV will continue to have access to an unprecedented package of financial support including an increase in the generosity of welfare payments worth a further £9.3bn according to Office for Budget Responsibility estimates. These changes also include a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit (UC) standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and a nearly £1 billion increase in support for renters through increases to the Local Housing Allowance rates for UC and Housing Benefit claimants.

Those who live or work in local lockdown areas who receive a notification that they need to shield will be eligible for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) for as long as the advice for them to shield remains in place (subject to the normal eligibility conditions). Individuals will be able to use this notification as evidence for their employer that they cannot work, including for SSP purposes.

■ Hospitality Industry and Tourism: VAT

Anthony Mangnall:

[\[90270\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the number of businesses in the hospitality and tourism sectors that have benefited from the temporary cut in Value Added Tax.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has temporarily applied a reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) to tourist attractions and goods and services supplied by the hospitality sector. It came into effect on 15 July 2020 and will end on 12 January 2021 and applies across the UK.

The temporary reduced rate will support over 150,000 businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs following the lifting of the COVID-19 lockdown.

■ Hospitality Industry: VAT

Jane Hunt:

[\[90292\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment his Department has made of the feasibility of extending the reduced rate of VAT for hospitality, holiday accommodation and attractions beyond 12 January 2021 to further support business in those sectors.

Jesse Norman:

The Government has temporarily applied a reduced rate of VAT (5 per cent) to tourist attractions and goods and services supplied by the hospitality sector. It came into effect on 15 July 2020 and will end on 12 January 2021 and applies across the UK.

Applying the reduced rate for a longer period would come at a significant cost to the Exchequer. However, the Government keeps all taxes under review.

■ Public Houses: Non-domestic Rates

Kate Griffiths:

[\[90276\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will extend the business rates holiday for pubs.

Jesse Norman:

The unprecedented full business rates holiday for retail, hospitality and leisure properties for the financial year is worth £10 billion to business in 2020-21. All eligible businesses will pay no business rates in England for 12 months from 1 April 2020.

The Government will continue to look at how to adjust support in a way that ensures people can get back to work, protecting both the UK economy and the livelihoods of people across the country.

The Government considers all reliefs in the round, against the broader fiscal and economic impacts of COVID-19 and as part of the Business Rates Review, and would encourage businesses and individuals to respond to the review's Call for Evidence document.

■ Revenue and Customs: Correspondence**Dave Doogan:** [\[90244\]](#)

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when HMRC plans to respond to the letters dated 18 May 2020 and 10 July 2020 from the hon Member for Angus on the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

Jesse Norman:

The HMRC Director responsible for the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, Paul Riley, duly replied to the Honourable Member's letter on 18 September 2020. HMRC apologise for the delay in responding.

WORK AND PENSIONS**■ Child Maintenance Service: Correspondence****Rosie Cooper:** [\[90087\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will take steps to ensure that the Child Maintenance Service responds to the letter of 24 June 2020 from the hon Member for West Lancashire, reference 121027357794.

Mims Davies:

A substantive reply was sent to the hon. Member by the Child Maintenance Service on 21 September; I apologise for the long delay.

■ Pension Funds: Climate Change**Caroline Lucas:** [\[91603\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, if she will make it her policy that pension fund trustees should undertake value at risk financial modelling for a 1.5 degree scenario as part of the UK's role in delivering the Paris Agreement .

Guy Opperman:

Government is already acting to ensure that pensioners are investing with due regard to climate change. In 2018 we introduced the Environmental, Social and Governance regulations, we were the first G7 country to legislate for net zero in 2019 and this year we are the first G7 country to legislate for TFCF. These latest changes are in the Pensions Schemes Bill 2020.

Our policy is to require trustees to assess and report financial risk against a range of scenarios including one corresponding to an average temperature rise on pre-industrial levels of between 1.5 and 2 ° C. Our consultation launched on 26 August sets out the requirements that trustees must meet to and undertake this assessment and report on the resilience of the scheme's assets, liabilities and investment strategy and, in the case of Defined Benefit schemes, funding strategy. This is in line with the recommendations of the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures.

The consultation can be viewed in full at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/taking-action-on-climate-risk-improving-governance-and-reporting-by-occupational-pension-schemes>

■ Personal Independence Payment

Jessica Morden:

[90094]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2020 to Question 81702 on Personal Independent Payment, how many of the 3,310 personal independence payment claimants since April 2018 who died within three months of their initial application being disallowed had made previous claims that were refused.

Justin Tomlinson:

Personal Independence Payment is claimed by people with a range of health conditions and disabilities, many of which are degenerative or life limiting. The Department treats the tragic death of any claimant sympathetically.

The Government has taken steps to ensure that new claims made under Special Rules for Terminal Illness are fast tracked and were being cleared in 4 working days on average in April 2020.

I also refer the Hon. Member to the correction to the answer to Question 81702.

480 claimants had previously registered a Personal Independence Payment claim that was disallowed.

There is no evidence in this data to suggest someone's reason for claiming Personal Independence Payments was the cause of their death and it would be misleading to suggest otherwise.

Jessica Morden:

[90095]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to the Answer of 8 September 2020 to Question 81702 on Personal Independence Payment, how many of the 3,310 personal independence payment claimants who died within three months of their initial application being disallowed applied under normal rules; and what conditions those claimants had.

Justin Tomlinson:

Personal Independence Payment is claimed by people with a range of health conditions and disabilities, many of which are degenerative or life limiting. The Department treats the tragic death of any claimant sympathetically.

The Government has taken steps to ensure that new claims made under Special Rules for Terminal Illness are fast tracked and were being cleared in 4 working days on average in April 2020.

The cause of death of claimants is not collated centrally by the Department. There is no evidence in this data to suggest someone's reason for claiming Personal

Independence Payments was the cause of their death and it would be misleading to suggest otherwise.

I also refer the Hon. Member to the correction to the answer to Question 81702.

A breakdown of conditions is listed in the accompanying table.

Attachments:

1. Attachment for PQ 90095 [90095.docx]

■ **Universal Credit**

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck:

[91761]

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether she plans to bring forward with immediate effect the proposal to allow universal credit claimants an extended period to repay advances and other debts through monthly deductions.

Will Quince:

The Government has already taken significant steps to extend the repayment time for advances from 6 months to 12 months. This will increase to 24 months from October 2021 as announced in the 2019 Budget.

The Government has also reduced the normal maximum deduction from 40% to 30% of a claimant's standard allowance from October 2019 and this will be further reduced to 25% from October 2021. For claimants who do find themselves in unexpected hardship, advance repayments can be deferred for up to three months.

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Digital Technology

Chi Onwurah:

[83795]

To ask the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, whether (a) digital inclusion, (b) online harms and (c) algorithmic bias will be in the scope of the Government's forthcoming Digital Strategy.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 17 September 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Caroline Dinenage:

As I have previously announced, the forthcoming Digital Strategy will set out how the Government wants to maximise the benefits of a tech-led recovery to Covid-19, whilst coherently addressing the challenges it poses. The Strategy will focus on growth and using tech to power us out of the recession, to drive productivity and to create jobs in all parts of our economy. For the aspirations of this Strategy to be delivered successfully, we recognise people will need the capability and confidence to get the most out of an increasingly digital world. As part of the development process of the Digital Strategy, we are considering the most suitable ways to embed inclusion objectives to ensure that all citizens can benefit from a digitally-driven society.

On online harms, we published the initial government response to the Online Harms White Paper in February, which set out the direction of travel, and we will publish the Full Government Response later this year. We are engaging experts, regulators, and industry over the coming months to ensure that the regulatory landscape is coherent, coordinated and effective.

The Digital Strategy will also set out our plans for a governance regime that enables trust in digital technologies, provides clarity to businesses, and unlocks growth and innovation across the economy.

My officials in DCMS are continuing to develop the details of the Strategy ahead of its publication later this year and we welcome ideas for the Strategy from stakeholders, including Honourable Members.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE■ **Mauritius: Oil****Neil Coyle:**[\[81961\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the oil leak of August 2020 in Mauritius, what steps his Department is taking to support the Mauritian Government.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 14 September 2020. The correct answer should have been:

James Duddridge:

In phone calls with the Mauritian Foreign Minister on 14 and 19 August, I offered the UK's support and asked Mauritius how best we could assist in the aftermath of the spill.

I also spoke to two of the UK experts on 3 September to hear directly how their work has contributed in the aftermath of the oil spill. The UK subsequently deployed three ecology experts from the UK's Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science. They are assessing the scale of the damage and helping Mauritius identify the best ways to restore its coastline and protect species at risk. A package of legal and technical advice has been provided to assist with the safe disposal of the stricken ship. The UK has also committed funds to support the Mauritian Wildlife **Foundation** Fund with urgent work on local nature reserves. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and assist the Mauritian Government to limit the impact of the spill.

HOME OFFICE■ **Common Travel Area****Stephen Farry:**[\[83978\]](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what mechanisms are in place to tackle potential breaches of rights under the Common Travel Area.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 September 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Kevin Foster:

~~To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what mechanisms are in place to tackle potential breaches of rights under the Common Travel Area~~

~~To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Command Paper 258 entitled UK points-based immigration system: further details, whether passport checks will take place on on (a) air and (b) sea travel between (i) Northern Ireland to Great Britain and (ii) Great Britain to Northern Ireland.~~

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the July 2020 Command Paper entitled UK Points Based System Further Details, CP 258, whether she plans to include in a universal permission to travel requirement (a) EU nationals without settled status and (b) other non-visa nationals wishing to travel from the Republic of Ireland to (i) Northern Ireland and (ii) Great Britain

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the July 2020 Command Paper entitled UK Points Based System Further Details, CP 258, what assessment she has made of the implications for her proposals on no routine immigration controls on journeys from within the Common Travel area to the UK and no immigration controls on the Northern Ireland – Ireland land border of her policy on a universal permission to travel requiring everyone wishing to travel to the UK excluding British and Irish nationals to seek permission in advance of travel via a UK Electronic Travel Authorisation.

The Universal Permission to Travel requirement will require everyone wishing to travel to the UK (except British and Irish citizens) to seek permission in advance of travel. We will introduce Electronic Travel Authorisations (ETAs) for visitors and passengers transiting through the UK who do not currently need a visa for short stays or who do not already have an immigration status prior to travelling, which will act as their permission.

As now, the UK will not operate routine immigration controls on journeys from within the Common Travel Area, with no immigration controls whatsoever on the Republic of Ireland-Northern Ireland land border. However, individuals arriving in the UK must continue to enter in line with the UK's immigration framework including the Universal Permission to Travel requirement.

The CTA has never required the UK and Ireland to have entirely harmonised immigration arrangements for non-British or non-Irish citizens. Key to this is the high level of cooperation on border security to ensure that legitimate travel is facilitated while those who intend to abuse the arrangements are prevented from entering.

■ Immigration Controls

Stephen Farry:

[83980]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the July 2020 Command Paper entitled UK Points Based System Further Details, CP 258, whether she plans to include in a universal permission to travel requirement (a) EU nationals without settled status and (b) other non-visa nationals wishing to travel from the Republic of Ireland to (i) Northern Ireland and (ii) Great Britain.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 September 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Kevin Foster:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what mechanisms are in place to tackle potential breaches of rights under the Common Travel Area

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The Universal Permission to Travel requirement will require everyone wishing to travel to the UK (except British and Irish citizens) to seek permission in advance of travel. We will introduce Electronic Travel Authorisations (ETAs) for visitors and passengers transiting through the UK who do not currently need a visa for short stays or who do not already have an immigration status prior to travelling, which will act as their permission.

As now, the UK will not operate routine immigration controls on journeys from within the Common Travel Area, with no immigration controls whatsoever on the Republic of Ireland-Northern Ireland land border. However, individuals arriving in the UK must continue to enter in line with the UK's immigration framework including the Universal Permission to Travel requirement.

The CTA has never required the UK and Ireland to have entirely harmonised immigration arrangements for non-British or non-Irish citizens. Key to this is the high level of cooperation on border security to ensure that legitimate travel is facilitated while those who intend to abuse the arrangements are prevented from entering.

Stephen Farry:

[83981]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to the July 2020 Command Paper entitled UK Points Based System Further Details, CP 258, what assessment she has made of the implications for her proposals on no routine immigration controls on journeys from within the Common Travel area to the UK and no immigration controls on the Northern Ireland - Ireland land border of her policy on a universal permission to travel requiring everyone wishing to travel to the UK excluding British and Irish nationals to seek permission in advance of travel via a UK Electronic Travel Authorisation.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 September 2020. The correct answer should have been:

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~~To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what mechanisms are in place to tackle potential breaches of rights under the Common Travel Area~~

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As now, the UK will not operate routine immigration controls on journeys from within the Common Travel Area, with no immigration controls whatsoever on the Republic of Ireland-Northern Ireland land border. However, individuals arriving in the UK must continue to enter in line with the UK's immigration framework including the Universal Permission to Travel requirement.

The CTA has never required the UK and Ireland to have entirely harmonised immigration arrangements for non-British or non-Irish citizens. Key to this is the high level of cooperation on border security to ensure that legitimate travel is facilitated while those who intend to abuse the arrangements are prevented from entering.

■ Immigration Controls: Northern Ireland

Stephen Farry:

[83979]

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to Command Paper 258 entitled UK points-based immigration system: further details, whether passport checks will take place on on (a) air and (b) sea travel between (i) Northern Ireland to Great Britain and (ii) Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

An error has been identified in the written answer given on 8 September 2020. The correct answer should have been:

Kevin Foster:

~~To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what mechanisms are in place to tackle potential breaches of rights under the Common Travel Area~~

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security to ensure that legitimate travel is facilitated while those who intend to abuse the arrangements are prevented from entering.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

CABINET OFFICE

■ Meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): [\[HCWS465\]](#)

The fourth meeting of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee will take place on 28 September 2020 in Brussels, with delegations attending in person and by video conference.

The meeting will be co-chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP and Vice President of the European Commission, Mr Maroš Šefčovič.

The agenda will include three items:

1. Introduction and opening remarks from co-chairs
 - 1.1 Stocktake of Specialised Committee meetings
2. Update on Withdrawal Agreement Implementation
 - 2.1 Citizens' rights
 - 2.2 Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland
 - 2.3 Protocol on Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus
 - 2.4 Protocol on Gibraltar
 - 2.5 Financial provisions
3. AOB and concluding remarks

The UK delegation will include:

- Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP
- The Paymaster General, Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt MP

Representatives from the Northern Ireland Executive have also been invited to form part of the UK delegation.

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

■ Loot Box Call for Evidence Launch

Minister of State for Digital and Culture (Caroline Dinenage): [\[HCWS464\]](#)

I am today launching a call for evidence on loot boxes in video games. I want to understand fully the existing research and concerns around loot boxes including any evidence of links to gambling-like behaviour and problem gambling amongst young people. This fulfils a commitment the government announced on 8 June as part of its

response to the DCMS Select Committee's report on Immersive and Addictive Technologies.

The government takes concerns around potential harms from loot boxes seriously. This open call for evidence will seek detailed information on the impact of loot boxes on players, particularly children and young people, examining concerns that loot boxes may encourage gambling-like behaviour and lead to problem gambling, as well as examining the size and scale of the loot box market in the UK, and the impact of current voluntary and statutory protections. The call for evidence will also seek information on the direct experiences of video games players and adults responsible for children and young people who play video games.

In 2019, the government committed to review the Gambling Act with a particular focus on tackling issues around online loot boxes. The results from the call for evidence will be considered alongside the review of the Gambling Act and will inform future actions in regard to loot boxes. The government stands ready to take action should the outcomes of the call for evidence support taking a new approach to ensure users, and particularly young people, are better protected.

The government continues to support the growth of the video games sector in the UK, recognising that video games bring great economic, cultural and social benefits. Over half the UK population plays games, the vast majority engaging safely with content that allows them to enjoy fun, exciting play, find moments of relaxation, socialise and learn new skills. The video games sector, a key part of the UK's world-leading creative industries, is also a cutting edge creator and adopter of innovative new technologies, and a provider of highly skilled creative jobs.

However, evolving digital technologies such as video games also present new responsibilities to ensure that users - particularly children and vulnerable people - are not exposed to harm.

I believe the call for evidence the government is launching today is an important step towards gathering the evidence required to ensure we can support the further growth of this innovative and important industry while protecting users.

The call for evidence document will be available on gov.uk.